

Doing Good or Doing Well?

On Morality and Rationality in International Politics

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Preface

This is my thesis for the *candidatus rerum politicarum* degree in political science, at the University of Oslo.

Chapter 3, Ethics and Rationality in Prisoner's Dilemma, is a rewritten paper turned in as part of the exam on the course stv919. That course was also taught by Professor Hovi.

In writing a thesis there are several persons that need to be mentioned, and thanked for their help. First of all, I would very much like to thank Professor Jon Hovi, who assisted me as my supervisor, for his tremendous help. I would also like to thank Dr Henrik Syse, who was co-supervisor. His help was indeed also very helpful.

There are several others that need to be mentioned as well. The participants on the thesis seminar in political theory led by Professor Bjørn Rasch, the autumn 2002, for giving me ideas to how this thesis could be written. I would like to thank Hanne Karin Fjelde and Elisabeth Breivik who inspired and helped me as part of the "war council". I would also like to thank my dad, Jan Morten Berger, and Ketil Aukrust who have generously corrected my English.

The topic of this thesis has also been discussed with fellow students and friends. These discussions have inspired parts of this thesis. I thank everyone who in some way took part in these discussions with me.

Although these individuals have helped me in several different ways, any errors or shortcomings in this thesis are mine.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Ylva, whose love and support has been tremendous. Without her help, love and patience this thesis would probably not been a reality.

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1. Introduction

“What I did was rational! It had nothing to do with ethics!” A former colleague of mine said this once. Even if this quote did not come from a context of international relations, it illustrates what my thesis is about. The terms ethics and rationality can both be said to be two connected terms, or as my colleague said, two very different terms.

These terms are very abstract and there is much literature on them. My primary focus will be international politics. Put in simple terms, my thesis will focus on what is smart to do in one case (rational) and what is right (ethical) to do in the same case. I shall also focus on how these two terms may interact in different areas.

Some may indicate that there is no connection between ethics and rationality, while other again may say that ethics and rationality does not have to differ. It is precisely this that my thesis will be about.

1.1 Research questions

The theme for the thesis is the relationship between rationality and morality, especially in international politics. The focus in this thesis is *how morality and rationality work as motivational factors in international politics*. This is done through three different stages. First the prisoner’s dilemma is discussed: *What is rational, what is ethical and how do people actually act in experiments in the prisoner’s dilemma*. Secondly, the same questions are discussed, but only through the *ultimatum and dictator games*: *What is rational, what is ethical and how do people actually act in experiments in ultimatum and dictator games?* Thirdly, *is morality only used as rhetorical wrapping, or is morality a motivation on its own?* To answer these questions, the morality and rationality will be defined.

What will be rational to do in different (game theoretical) situations, and what will be the ethically right actions in the same situations. Here I concentrate on especially two different types of games; prisoner's dilemma and ultimatum and dictator games.

When I look at these games, different scenarios will be tested. I shall then determine what the right action in these given situations (games) is. I am also going to solve the games to find out what is the rational thing to do. The two different results will be compared to examine whether the ethical and the rational stand in agreement, or if there is a difference. Finally, my two predictions will be compared with different literature that has summarised experiments on these game types. The difference between the results and the predictions will be explained with basis in my earlier discussion. It may be considered a weakness that these experiments do not necessarily come from the field of international politics. My argument is that I can nevertheless use these findings in the part of my thesis covering these experiments.

Can it be that ethics works as a wrapping of rational behaviour? Here I think of the cases where a rational action, which is not done with any thought to moral considerations, is argued with, both nationally and internationally, ethical arguments. In this way the actor claims that the action is an ethical right action, even if there are completely different motives behind it. One can also question whether or not this then will be an ethical action, something that will not be answered explicitly.

1.2 Method

In chapters three and four, I use game theory as a theoretical tool for showing what is rational. When I look at one type of game, I examine it in general, and set up the alternatives that exist. Then I shall, based on the ethical discussion, show which choice is ethical, before I solve the game and give the answer to what is rational.

In chapter five, I shall look at different scenarios. At first the scenario is outlined, before how the rational and ethical perspectives play together, in the given scenario,

is shown. In that chapter empirical examples will be used to strengthen my argument and illustrate my points.

I am going to use some original literature, John Rawls and John Stuart Mill, in the field of ethics. But much of the ethical theory will also be based on Peter Singers anthology. I shall also use Michael Walzer in this aspect, when it comes to the Just War Tradition.

The debate on rationality will both be based upon Jon Hovi and Jon Elster. (Jon Hovi bases his text in most part on Jon Elsters “thin theory”). I shall also use texts by Knut Midgaard and John Harsanyi.

A basic assumption made in game theory is that the actors are rational, and that they know that the other actors are rational as well (common knowledge rationality). In this thesis being rational means to maximize self-interest (which is defined as national interest and the best for the people in question) and act according to their preferences.

Ethics and morality are sometimes two different terms. They are used interchangeably here, though. This means that whether it is said ethical standards or morality, the intention is the same. There are no intended differences between the international arena, the international sphere or international politics. Although nation may be used in the meaning people, as in the “Sioux nation”, in this thesis nation is used in the meaning country. “Nation” in this thesis is therefore defined as restricted territory, with a government that has monopoly on the use of force.

1.3 Disposition

The present chapter is an introductory chapter, which will introduce the theme of this thesis in general. This chapter will also clarify some terms to be used.

The second chapter will be about the general relationship between ethics and rationality. I shall examine if there is a difference between them, or if they are, or at

least can be, overlapping. In addition, I shall be present definitions of rationality and ethics in chapter two.

In chapter three I shall also examine the relationship between ethics and rationality. However, here I examine the prisoner's dilemma game. This game will be introduced its characteristics shown. The prisoner's dilemma is probably the best known game in game theory. Thereafter, I see which action in the given games are the ethical correct, based on the ethical theory I defined in chapter two. Then the different games outlined will be solved to show which action is the rational action. With basis in these considerations, I shall compare the results with each other, to find the differences. This will again be compared with experiments done, to see how people actually act in these situations.

Chapter four will be quite similar to chapter three, but focuses on ultimatum and dictator games instead of the prisoner's dilemma. My prediction is that in experiments, one will not find that the actors behave as rational as game theory predicts. I shall examine how ethics may be a reason for people not acting rationally.

Cases where ethics are used as a wrapping for rational behaviour will be the main theme of chapter five. My interest here lies in how ethical arguments are used. These arguments can defend both rational actions, and actions that are actually ethical in their nature. This chapter will contain two empirical examples to illustrate my points.

2. Ethics and Rationality

In this chapter I shall focus on the two terms ethics and rationality. After having introduced these terms, I shall look at the relations between them, and see how they interact and how they differ. These terms were briefly introduced in chapter one, but in this chapter I intend to go deeper into the terms, and elaborate on the discussion that surrounds both ethics and rationality. When I define ethics, I base my discussion upon my primary interests, which are how ethics may apply in game theory and in international politics. However, an introduction to the philosophical field of morality and ethics cannot be done without some reference to individual behaviour.

In this chapter, I shall present the terms ethics and rationality before I look at different opinions to whether or not ethics play or should play a role in the international community. Then I shall proceed to the interaction and divergence of these terms, proposing three different possibilities of how rationality and ethics may be in connection with each other. Finally, I shall summarize and conclude.

2.1 Rationality

What is rationality? One answer might simply be that rationality is what is best for the actor in any given situation. The answer might also be much more complicated than that.

2.1.1 John C. Harsanyi's definition of rationality

When defining rationality, it can be useful to see what rational behaviour is. According to John C. Harsanyi (1986:83), rational behaviour is, in most cases, how to achieve any given end, i.e. how to find the means to achieve these goals. Thus rationality is a normative concept. This is the model he calls “means-ends model of rationality” (Harsanyi, 1986). However, Harsanyi also states that rationality “is used

for explanation, for prediction, and even for mere description of human behaviour” (ibid.), not only as a normative notion.

Harsanyi (1986:85) goes further, and points to problems with the means-ends model: It fails to focus on the possibility of choices between different ends. He solves this problem by presenting another model, “the preferences-opportunities model”. This model places the actor in a position to choose between several different ends, given his (already existing) set of preferences, and the different opportunities that may arise. Choosing one end implies giving up other ends. This leads Harsanyi to state:

“[...] [R]ational behaviour – as defined by the preferences-opportunities model – will be equivalent to utility-maximization (utility-maximization theorem)” (Harsanyi, 1986:86).

Thus, rational behaviour in the preferences-opportunities model is behaviour that seeks to maximize one’s own payoff¹.

There are times when the choice of what action to undertake can be taken under 100% certainty. The preferences-opportunities model does not allow for actions or decisions under uncertainty or risk². So what is rational behaviour under risk or uncertainty? Here one can use the Bayesian decision theory. This theory states that an actor, behaving consistently, would act so as to maximize the total mathematical value of expected utility (Harsanyi, 1986:87ff). In addition Harsanyi refers to the “sure-thing principle”, which he explains as follows (ibid.):

“Let X be a bet that would yield a given prize x to the decision maker if a specified event E took place [...]. Let Y be a bet that would yield him another prize y, which he prefers over x, if this event E took place. There are no other differences between the two bets. Then, the decision maker will consider bet Y to be at least as desirable as bet X”

¹ Payoff is not necessarily economic profit, but might just as well be payoffs in other pre-defined areas, as e.g. military or political.

² Risk is defined as when the actor knows at least the probabilities of all possible outcomes. Uncertainty is defined as when some, or all, of the probabilities is unknown (or even undefined) (Harsanyi, 1986:87).

Harsanyi finds it difficult to imagine any rational actor who would violate this principle (ibid.). This leads to a strong support of the Bayesian definition; at least when you consider Harsanyi's final argument for the Bayesian theory, that any other principle can lead to highly irrational behaviour (ibid.).

According to Harsanyi (ibid.) the acceptance of Bayesian theory is as good as unanimous where risk is involved. If uncertainty is involved, however, then it is more controversial, although less so in the last couple of decades.

Now we have several different models of rationality, based on Harsanyi. How can these be defined to one general definition? Harsanyi (1986:89) has proposed three different branches of rational behaviour. These three are:

- Utility theory, which is individual rational behaviour.
- Game theory, which is rational interaction between two actors or more.
- Ethics, which is rational behaviour based on "impartial and impersonal criteria".

In total, John C. Harsanyi's definition of rationality and rational behaviour is dependent on the situation the actor is in. If an actor makes a decision solely on his own behalf, without any interaction with other actors, it would be useful to define it as utility theory. If, on the other hand, the actor interacts with other actors, we should define rational behaviour within the boundaries of game theory. The last option is when the actor makes a decision based on the common good for the "society" as a whole, considering the good of others; we would use the ethical branch of rational behaviour.

2.1.2 Jon Elster's definition of rationality

Jon Elster presents rationality in a different way than Harsanyi. Instead of using either of the terms rationality or rational behaviour, he introduces the term "rational choice" (Elster, 1986). He stresses three elements that constitute rational behaviour. First there are all possible actions, which are subject to different constraints, such as economic and physical. This element is the "feasible set" (Elster, 1986:4). The

second element is the “causal structure of the situation” (ibid.). By that he means what action leads to which ends. The third element is the ranking of all possible outcomes. Thus, according to Jon Elster, to act rationally is simply to choose the action that will produce the end that the actor prefers (ibid.).

Jon Elster divides (as does Harsanyi) these “choice situations” into two different dimensions (ibid.). First he draws a line between perfect and imperfect information, and complete and incomplete information. Perfect information is when all the actors know all previous moves in a game. Translated to this situation, it would mean that all possible parameters that can have a (great) impact on the outcome of any action the given actor can choose to do, is known to all actors. Imperfect information would then, naturally, be the opposite; there is some information that would have an impact on the outcome that is not known to all players. It is complete information when all actors know all other actors’ preferences and every actor knows that every other actor knows that they know, and so on. Otherwise, if the preferences of at least one actor are not commonly known by the actors, it is incomplete information. If there is incomplete or imperfect information, there are choices to be made under risk or uncertainty (Elster, 1986:5).

The second dimension Elster points to is the difference between the situations that have parametric decisions and strategic decisions (Elster, 1986:7). If there are parametric decisions, the actor is bound by parametric or given constraints. The strategic decisions, on the other hand, are recognized by interdependence to choices made by other actors. In other words, situations that contain strategic decisions are the topic of game theory (ibid.).

Jon Elster also introduces another definition of rationality, or rather two other definitions. He shows us a thick definition and a thin definition (Hovi, 1998:4-5). The thin theory bases rationality on consistency between preferences and actions, and consistency between the preferences. The difference between these two definitions is that the thick definition includes the thin definition as well as autonomy and reflection over one’s belief.

2.1.3 Raison d'état

World leaders can be said to choose between different levels of utility (payoff) when they act on the international arena. First they can maximize their own personal gains. This could be enhancing their personal power or the size of their Swiss bank account. A second possible utility the actions can be guided by is the total utility of the entire world. This would be to make the world a better place for all mankind, not only those who happen to be citizens of a certain nation. The third possibility is *raison d'état*. This would be the middle ground, where the state leaders try to maximize the total utility for their people.

With this argument, there are several different ways to regard the international arena. However, if an actor acts on basis of *raison d'état*, he takes only the national interest into consideration. This can imply two ways to the relations between ethics and rationality. Either ethics should have no part to play on the international arena, or the ethical right action is to promote national interest. Both these possibilities are examined in a later paragraph.

2.1.4 Conclusion on rationality

It is Elster's thin theory of rationality that will be the basis of this discussion. As stated earlier, I do not consider ethics to be part of the definition of rationality, as John C. Harsanyi does. I choose this way to give substance to the discussion, that given the fact that if ethics were part of rationality, this discussion would be pointless. I would like to mention that if one were to use Bayesian theory, the thick definition would have to be used, but since I do not touch upon that aspect, I shall use the thin definition.

However, even if I base my definition of rationality upon Elster's thin definition, it can be a little more operational. I presume hereafter that when an actor is behaving rationally in the international community, he is promoting the national interest, and

not his own. A situation where the actor acts after the motto “l'etat, c'est moi”³ is not considered to be in accordance with the national interest. What is best for all citizens of the nation in question is the national interest. Thus, to act rational is to act in accordance with the national interest, and not to act upon other considerations than that.

2.2 Ethics and morality

What is morality, and what does it consist of? Why should man act in accordance with abstract rules and norms? These questions are the essence of any discussion about ethics and morality. Beauchamp (1991: 6-7) answers the first question with the argument that morality is some sort of “social institution”. He believes that the ethical norms by which we live are learned as we grow older beyond infancy, before we learn the actual norms and rules according to which we act. In other words, we learn ethical behaviour before we learn the ethical rules. This would then result in ethical behaviour being subject to the standards of upbringing, and would as a result differ from society to society.

What, then, do these ethical norms consist of? There are plenty of ethical theories. These are often divided into “deontology” and “teleology”. Though the line between these is not easily determined once and for all, the distinction can be a useful tool in defining different ethical theories, and in showing how moral philosophers have actually argued.

2.2.1 Why act in accordance with ethics?

Why should we behave in accordance with these ethical norms and rules of behaviour? The answer is not obvious, because there would probably be as many different answers as there are people trying to answer it. Two answers may, however,

³ “L'etat, c'est moi” was the motto of King Ludvig XIV, and means “the state, it is me”.

be suggested (Midgely, 1993: 3-4). The first answer might be that we should obey the ethical norms because they are given to us by a deity (for example God). A second answer can be that the ethical norms are part of “a social contract”. Some of these rules are acknowledged as laws in the society; others are unwritten. The people in a given society would nevertheless agree that some things should not be done.⁴ Why do they agree on this? There are some elements that that can be singled out as probably most important. These elements are not conclusive, but may highlight some important elements to why ethical acts are done. As already mentioned, one reason can be that the ethical standard is, or is alleged to be, derived from a deity. The rules are followed because they are given to us from a god. Another explanation to why the ethical standard is followed may be through an agreement. This resembles the “social contract” theory. We understand that we cannot break these rules because by living in a society we accept that we have to follow certain norms and rules. A third answer may simply be tradition. When acting ethically, it is done because it is tradition to do so. The final element might be that some authorities, other than a deity, have told us to do so. This could be the King of Norway telling in a speech that bullying others is not nice. All these elements would not have mattered if it were not for one significant point: It works. People most often act in accordance with several ethical rules. Those ethical rules that do not work somehow have been, or will at some point be, abandoned.

2.2.2 Deontological ethical theories

What separates deontological ethical theories from teleological theories is that deontological theories judge an action by whether or not it is done out of duty. This could be as a duty given by God, but it could also be a duty given from norms derived from a social contract. This latter answer seems to be difficult to apply to international politics, because for ethical norms to be part of the social contract there

⁴ I do not think of the cases where a despot uses his power to make laws that people do not agree with, even though some theorists believe such laws nevertheless should be obeyed.

has to be a social contract. The field of international politics is often referred to as an anarchy, and if it is an anarchy there is no social contract. However, if we regard the term social contract a bit more loosely, we could interpret it as implying both written and unwritten norms regulating international relations. With this interpretation in mind, the ethical norms that regulate or at least play a part in international relations would be commonly agreed standards.

Another point to be made is that most people have a sense of what is the right thing and what is wrong thing to do on the international arena. Deontology is often expressed in terms of what is right and what is wrong. Every nation has certain rights, e.g. to defend itself from an attack; and certain duties, e.g. to follow international law. Acting in accordance with these rights and duties would be considered to act ethical, in the deontological sense.

2.2.3 Teleological ethics

Teleological ethics comprise theories that are based upon the idea that it is not primarily how we act that is judged, but the results of our actions. An example may be a situation where you can kill some suicide bomber, before she triggers her bomb, in a crowded area. If you should live by the ethical rule “you must not kill”, then clearly you are not allowed to kill her. However, if you regard the consequences, the choice of doing nothing if you have the option to stop this terrorist act is obviously the wrong choice⁵.

This could be translated into “ends justify the means”. Ethically speaking, end cannot mean personal gains, but common good for everybody or at least the best possible end for all relevant parties. One may do the most horrible acts, as long as the ends are justifiable. This is a truth with minor adjustments. One must also, obviously, consider side-effects. Although the goal of an action is justifiable, the side-effect may not be.

⁵ Of course, a terrorist may by some be regarded as a “freedom fighter”. I do not take this aspect into consideration here.

Consider this example. A given dictator is an evil for the international community, and for the people of his own nation. Although there are rules that we should not go to war, a war may be justifiable to “liberate” the nation from this terrible dictator. The side effect, however, of a devastating war that can destroy the material foundations for the people who live there, might be an evil that cannot be justified by the primary effect of getting rid of the dictator. There are theorists, like Michael Walzer, who argue that war may be legitimate in such cases (Walzer, 2000). Although Walzer may be looked upon as a deontologist, it is useful to regard him as a representative for the teleological theorists as well.

The question of how ethical a certain action is, does not have a straight forward answer. An actor would have to weigh the positive and negative consequences against each other, to see whether or not it is an ethical act.

2.2.4 “The Golden Rule”

As I have shown, both teleological, and deontological ethical theories have important arguments regarding how one should act, and how to judge one’s actions. But which theory should one follow? Once again, I state that there is no definitive border between these two terms. One very good example is the “golden rule”. This rule can be formulated as such: “Act against others as you wish others to act against you”. It can also be formulated as a negative: “Do not act against others as you wish others not to act against you”. The positive formulation clearly states what to do in a specific situation. The negative formulation it is the opposite, it states what not to do.

An example of this may be that one rule is that a nation cannot go to military actions against another nation without declaring war first. This rule may be a result of the negative formulation of the golden rule. We do not want other countries to attack us without warning; therefore we should not do it ourselves. Another example may be that a nation should assist another nation after a devastating natural disaster. We want assistance when we are in need; therefore we should assist other countries when they are in need. The results of the negative part will often have a basis in law (national or

international) and in that perspective it may be natural to think of the positive rule as ethical guidance. A result of the positive formulation would be to follow the law, which is, at least in part, based on the negative formulation. In principle, however, the negative formulation is just as important as the positive.

2.2.5 What are good ethical actions?

The golden rule seems to be a rule to follow. If one is religious, it would seem natural to follow this rule because most religions incorporate some variation of it in its teachings. If one is not religious, it would still make sense because everybody could agree on it. A society based to a large extent on the golden rule, would work at least with regards to relations between actors in that society.

This still leaves one important question: What are ethical actions? Is it teleology or is it deontology? The answer is: Neither of them; or rather both. Here common sense should be used. It does not seem right to allow every type of action, just because the end is good. Neither can one accept an ethically acceptable action, if the consequences are horrifying. This is why the field of ethics is so complex. What seems clear, though, is that with common sense we end up in some middle ground, between teleology and deontology. This constitutes no problem because, as has been stated several times, there is no absolute difference between deontology and teleology.

It is here that the golden rule comes in. Common sense tells us that we cannot have an ethical guideline that divides me from you. This could give *you* the same argument as I had in the first place, and we would end up arguing. So what I can and should do, you can and should also do; and what I should not do, you should not do either, under otherwise similar circumstances.

What is the ethical right action in any given situation? The common sense answer would be “anything you want any others to do if they were in that same situation”, which I see as a variation of the golden rule.

2.3 Ethics' role in international politics?

As I have shown above, the arguments behind ethical considerations are diverse. Whatever they may be at an interpersonal level, I shall hereafter regard ethical norms in the field of international politics as a result of a “social contract”. I do this because I believe that whatever the reason for one state to act as it does, the interactions are, at least in part, based on agreements as to how nations and states should interact internationally.

The result of a lack of ethical and moral considerations will be a policy of maximising one's own utility, without any other considerations. However, there is an alternative. *Raison d'état* was presented earlier, and gives the actor a choice. He can act solely for his own personal benefit, or he can act in accordance with *raison d'état*. The third option is, of course, to act ethically. This paragraph will show how ethics can be regarded to play a role on the international arena. An example of this is the Just War tradition.

2.3.1 “Just War tradition” as ethics in the international arena

There can be places where ethics has a place, even in the international arena. Just war is a tradition that places ethics well inside the boundaries of international politics. This tradition can be traced as far back as to the dialogues of Plato (Syse, 2002). According to the Just War tradition, it is sometimes morally acceptable to resort to the use of violence in international politics. This is not special in itself, as other theorists clearly state the same, but after a closer examination, we see an ethical foundation for this argument. Michael Walzer (2000) shows both on which grounds a nation can resort to violence (“*ius ad bellum*”) and how a war should be fought (“*ius in bello*”). This is clearly linked to ethics. Walzer gives a very good example of grounds to use violence (Walzer, 2000:82-85). The Israelis made a surprise attack on Egypt on June 5, 1967, thus starting the six-day war. They did this after Egypt had closed the Suez-canal for Israeli ships, and followed up with forging alliances with other Arab nations. All this led Israel to initiate a surprise attack, which they claimed

was in self-defence. Walzer concurs with this being a legitimate act by the Israelis (ibid.). He argues that:

“[S]elf-defence seems the primary and indisputable right of any political community, merely because it is there and whatever the circumstances under which it achieved statehood” (Walzer, 2000:82).

Thus, self-defence is allowed. This is undisputed. But Egypt never attacked Israel, at least not with the use of military force. However, Walzer argues further (Walzer, 2000:85):

“[S]tates may use military force in the face of threats of war, whenever the failure to do so would seriously risk their territorial integrity or political independence”.

Walzer argues that the closing of the straits of Tiran, which had been agreed to being an international waterway after the Suez war in 1957, was a serious breach of Israel's independence and integrity, and given such a breach of independence the use of military force is allowed.

As the example above shows, it is possible to see whether or not a war is legitimate, although some probably would argue to the contrary. Both *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* can be found in the international community. There is an almost unanimous (at least publicly) agreement that there are ethical limits to the use of violence. These limits limit both when violence is used, and how it should not be used, when it is indeed used.

2.3.2 Conclusion on ethics on the international arena

As I have shown it is possible to argue for ethics in international politics. I choose to acknowledge the thought presented in the Just War tradition as a variant of how ethics should play a role in the international community. It is my belief that a community without ethics (other than taking care of one self) is a community not worthy of the label civilized. I do believe that the international community is, at least to a certain extent, civilized. The Just War tradition gives an example of both how

this can be said to exist, but also of the fact that it does exist, at least in some part. Thus, the conclusion to this paragraph is that ethics has a role to play on the international arena.

2.4 Is ethics different from rationality?

The terms rationality and ethics now being introduced, how do they come together? The answer most people give when confronted with these terms is that one thing has nothing to do with the other. Some feel quite strongly that behaving rational has absolutely nothing to do with behaving ethically. When asked, other people, especially those that have at least some knowledge of game theory and thus rationality, often answers that there is no tension between these two terms in this context.

David A. Welch (2000:3-4) sees four different perspectives on what he calls morality and national interest⁶. Firstly, he sees these as two “fundamentally different imperatives”, i.e. where ethics play a role in foreign policy, rationality cannot; and opposite, ethics cannot play a role where rationality does. The second perspective is the argument that acting in accordance with rationalism is the morally right thing to do. The third perspective is that these terms coincide even if they are “logically different considerations”. Trying to seek what is right will in the long run be the rational thing to do. The final perspective is a bit more complicated. Here he argues that sometimes saving the nation’s security or welfare comes second to doing the otherwise “right act”. I shall use three perspectives derived from these four perspectives to discuss rationality versus ethics in international politics. These perspectives are (i) rationality and ethics as two pages in the same book, (ii) ethics and rationality as two fundamentally different imperatives, and (iii) ethics as superior to rationality. The situations where it is rational to act in accordance with ethical

⁶ I understand Welch to be using “national interest” approximately (thus interchangeably) as I use “rationality”.

standards are not discussed here, since I shall discuss these situations in a later chapter.

2.4.1 Rationality and Ethics as basically the same thing

Defining these terms can be done quite easily. Assume that ethics and rationality are one and the same, and conclude that if it is the rational thing to do, then it is the right thing to do as well. According to this chain of thought, trying to act after other guidelines than promoting national interest is not only unwise, as one would no doubt be taken advantage of, but unethical as well. The primary, and indeed the only, guidelines that should govern acts in the international arena should be the good of your own people, i.e. *raison d'état*. Whatever promotes the well-being of your people, whether it implies going to war, imposing tariffs or entering into alliances, is the right thing to do.

If it is rational, then it is by definition the right thing to do. It is morally unacceptable to take anything into consideration than what is rational when acting in the international arena. An argument that ethics plays a part in an action is either an argument to legitimize a rational action or a result of a morally unacceptable action. Choosing to go to war against another nation to gain influence and economic hegemony, while this war could destroy the stability of the region, is such an example. Accordingly, this could be regarded as acceptable if the overall outcome of the war is positive for “the aggressor”.

2.4.2 Ethics and Rationality as fundamentally different

Another way to see how ethics and rationality relate to each other is to see them as completely different imperatives. A proponent of this view is George F. Kennan. According to this view, rationality cannot exist where ethics exist. Kennan (1985: 206) states that the governments' primary obligation is to promote the national interests, thus acting rationally instead of ethically when acting in the international community. One reason given to this argument is that there is no internationally

accepted standard that govern the international arena (Kennan, 1985: 207). Although some mantras are repeated on festive occasions, these mantras are so vague that they carry no real meaning. Kennan speaks primarily of USA, but these thoughts can be transferred to most countries, at least democracies.

There are, however, times when states actually use ethical arguments when they act in the international community. There may be several different reasons for this. It may be because it is rational to do act morally, or because it is not a primarily ethical action, but a rational action that is legitimized in public by ethical arguments.

These reasons will be explored in later chapters. I shall now focus on the third alternative, which is an actually ethical action. An example of such actions can be to democratize a tyranny. Kennan sees this argument as an invalid argument. Of course it can be in the national interest to democratize a tyranny, but democracy is a loose term. This, again, means that even if a tyrant is abolished and a democracy is installed, this does not necessarily imply that the national interest of the nation in question ("the aggressor") is promoted.

"There can be a tyranny of a majority as well as tyrannies of a minority" (Kennan, 1985: 209).

So, Kennan argues, an action of this kind would not only be a wrong action, it could be a foolish act. Replacing a "friendly" dictator with an "unfriendly" elected government does not promote the national interest.

Kennan has another argument as well. Even if a certain action on the international arena is bad, the alternatives might be worse (Kennan, 1985: 210). He points out that it is not the aggressor that will have to live with the consequences of such an action; it is the people and leaders of the tyranny. Although we believe that the end is justifiable and glorious, this might in fact not be the case.

"We are demanding, in effect, a species of veto power over those of their practices that we dislike, while denying responsibility for whatever may flow from the acceptance of our demands" (Kennan, 1985: 210).

He continues by pointing out that these actions are often a result of decisions, not by the majority, but by a religious, ethnic or ideological interest group. This could again imply that we get a set of double standards: “If it is our friend, we will look the other way, but if it is our enemy, then we must take him down.” Another implication might be that this action may seem acceptable now, but at another point in history it may be offensive (ibid.).

“This is unfortunate, for a lack of consistency implies a lack of principle in the eyes of much of the world; whereas morality, if not principled, is not really morality” (Kennan, 1985: 210-211).

Thus morality cannot be taken into consideration in the international arena. If any action were to be the result of ethical considerations based on principles, these actions would not be rational actions. Hence, morality and rationality are two fundamentally different imperatives.

2.4.3 Rationality as inferior to morality

This connection between rationality and ethics does not differ very much from the points of view presented earlier. However, if morality is superior to rationality, then there have to be differences between them. Still they are not completely separate. One proponent of this view was Reinhold Niebuhr. As an American theologian, he had a slightly different view from the ones presented above on how international policy should be. According to Paul Rich (1992: 295) Niebuhr saw some morality in the cold war. Neither USA nor USSR wanted the total destruction of mankind. This can be said to have ethical proportions. So, even if both the USSR and USA had the ability to destroy the world as we know it, they did not do it. It can be argued that neither of them did it because they knew that an attack would be retaliated and therefore would not be in the national interest, hence not rational. But USA did not start a nuclear attack on USSR before they had developed their own nuclear weapons, i.e. at a time when they did not have to fear retaliation (say, late 1940s or early 1950s). This *can* be contributed to morality.

Against this it could be argued that USA did not attack because they were busy with reconstructing Europe. To this argument one may also attach the fact that USA has used nuclear weapons in war, when they bombed Japan in 1945. In fact the United States is the only nation to ever have used nuclear weapons in a war, targeting civilians. Thus the United States has no ethical problem with using these kinds of weapons. This may be true, but there are enough differences between the bombings of Japan and a hypothetical bombing of the Soviet Union, e.g. Japan attacked Pearl Harbour, consequently they were already at war, while this was not the case between USA and USSR⁷.

This argument can be summarized as follows: Although national interest often guides the actions in the international arena, it is sometimes necessary to apply some ethical standards to these actions. This can for instance be to save mankind.

2.4.4 Conclusion on ethics vs rationality

Although some will argue that doing what is good for your nation, is doing what is right, I do not agree. I do not believe that the only ethical action one can undertake internationally is to benefit one's own people. Neither do I believe that ethics and rationality are so fundamental in their differences that where one is, the other cannot display itself. The only valid conclusion that can be drawn from the arguments above is the argument put forward by Reinhold Niebuhr, that rationality is inferior to ethics on the international arena. When he is giving morality superiority, Niebuhr must concede that there can be conflict between ethics and rationality, but that there need not be. In this case it is up to the actor to decide what to do. I find this conclusion to be very interesting.

⁷ There may be other reasons why Japan was bombed with nuclear weapons, and USSR was not, but the above may serve as an example on how the view can be used to explain morality on the international arena.

2.5 Summary and conclusion on ethics and rationality

2.5.1 Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the terms rationality and ethics. Ethics in the international community is based on a social contract. This contract consists of both written and unwritten rules of behaviour. After introducing both teleology and deontology, I entered the possibility that common sense should have something to say on what is right and what is wrong. “The Golden Rule” is an example of how this could constitute some rules of behaviour. Rationality can be defined in several different ways. I have used Jon Elster and John C. Harsanyi as a basis for the discussion on what constitutes rationality. I have also tried to see how rationality and ethics may interact, or if they are completely different imperatives. This was done with the help of David A. Welch’s four different perspectives (however I only discussed three of them, since I shall discuss the fourth in a later chapter).

2.5.2 Conclusion

In conclusion I should like to refer to a few points that I have made in this chapter. Firstly, when using rationality, I shall primarily concentrate on Jon Elster’s thin definition. Elster and Harsanyi do not differ very much on what is rational behaviour, but I choose to use Elster’s definition. Secondly, I conclude that ethics is part teleology, part deontology, and how they should be put together I determined by common sense. The golden rule is a great example of how this could, and should, be done. Thirdly, I would like to point out that ethics can and should play a part in international politics. The argument, that if you take other considerations than your own, you will sooner or later be taken advantage of, seems only to justify everyone’s egoism. Of course, if everybody thought that way, it would be true, but that does not make it right. Idealism is probably better, because a better climate on the international arena is possible, without everybody acting unilaterally. And the Just War tradition is a very good example of how one may look at the legality of different acts in the

international community, thus the international community being more than a mere anarchy.

3. Ethics and Rationality in Prisoner's Dilemma

This chapter will focus on the interaction between ethics and rationality in Prisoner's Dilemma (PD). How should one act according to rational arguments, and according to ethical arguments in different variations of PD? I regard PD here as illustrating different situations on the international arena, not at the personal level.

Concerning ethical considerations I should stress that any situation where moral arguments and ethical considerations are incorporated into the utility of each player (or actor), is not included here. I base my discussion on the assumption that rationality and ethics is not the same thing. Using game theory, as is done here, the way to incorporate other considerations than that of the actors is by way of changing the utilities. That would imply that ethical thought would be part of the utility, and that is not the case in this thesis. I stress this in order to clarify the differences between ethics and rationality. Another point that needs to be considered is that there are several different levels of ethical considerations for the decision maker. First, one can consider the consequences for one's own people only. Secondly, one may consider the consequences for the people of some, but not all, countries. Thirdly, there is the possibility of considering all people in all countries in the world. The countries considered are the countries which play the game.

A clarification I should make is that I presume that co-operation is not an action that deviates from any ethical standards. Co-operation could in some way e.g. engage in international cartels, with a negative purpose. Such extreme cases are not intended to be included under the term co-operation.

To clarify about the time horizon: If the time horizon is known then the game is played a finite number of times. Or the players may not actually know how many times the game is played out; they know the maximum number of times the game can be played. The game can then be considered a game with a finite time horizon (Hovi,

1998:91-92). If the players do not know the time horizon, or the time horizon is infinite, then the game has an indefinite time horizon.

To define what is ethical, both the golden rule, and utilitarianism will be used. These two different sets of theories will give an impression of the variety in the field of ethics. In addition I shall present “national interest” as a partial ethical guideline that may give some nuance to the ethical aspect.

PD can be used in both dynamic⁸ and static games. In the games where there are only two players, the discussion will draw on both dynamic and static games. The situations involving more than two players will only be analysed as a static game. This will amount to a discussion on (i) an N-player PD played once, (ii) 2-player PD played a finite number of times, and (iii) 2-player PD played an infinite number of times. What happens if (iv) a repeated two-actor PD that is repeated will also be discussed.

3.1 Basic prisoner's dilemma

When defining PD, it can be useful to see what collective action is. PD can be seen as a way to implement collective action, or to focus on problems with implementing it. Collective action is defined, according to Jon Elster (1985:137), with two conditions. First, each player must be better off if all players co-operate than if all players defect. Second, each player individually must be better off if she defects whatever the other players do. As shown in Figure 3.1, both these conditions are fulfilled in PD.

PD normally has two rules⁹:

- The first rule is: $T > R > P > S$.

⁸ Dynamic games can be divided into repeated games and sequential games. PD is only used on repeated games.

⁹ S = Sucker's payoff, R = Reward for mutual co-operation, P = Punishment for mutual defection, T = Temptation to defect (Hovi, 1998:90).

- The second rule is: $2R > S + T$

These rules are used as a basis in the PD presented here. However, in paragraph 3.3 the scenario when the game deviates from the latter rule will also be examined.

		Actor II	
		Co-operate (C)	Defect (D)
Actor I	Co-operate (C)	5(R) 5(R)	1(S) 6(T)
	Defect (D)	1(S) 6(T)	2(P) 2(P)

Figure 3.1: Basic Prisoner's dilemma - A number in **bold** indicates the preferred choice given the other players choice, and a grey area indicates Nash Equilibrium (NE).

Both actors have a dominant strategy, to defect. It is, however, better when both actors co-operate. This brings us to the essence of PD, which is that individual rationality aggregates to collective irrationality (Hovi & Rasch, 1997: 48). Figure 3.1 will be used as a basis for the following discussion.

3.1.1 Why is prisoner's dilemma relevant?

PD is relevant because a number of cases can be classified as PD. One good example is the arms race during the cold war (Hovi & Rasch 1997:44-48). It is interesting to see how people act, often against our predictions, given both rational and ethical considerations. Another reason why PD is interesting is because it is so well known, and a discussion of PD will give the main discussion of ethics versus rationality a wider audience. It is also relevant because PD is a game with a high degree of conflict. To illustrate this, the conflict rate can be calculated. The conflict rate is found by examining how many possible pairs there are of the outcomes. After the total number of pairs of outcomes is established, these pairs are compared to see whether both players agree on which outcome is best, or if their interests diverge. The conflict rate is the total number of pairs with diverging interest, divided by the total

number of pairs. PD has a conflict rate of $5/6$ while for example another famous game, chicken, only has a conflict rate of $3/6$.

3.2 Rational choice in the prisoner's dilemma?

The rational thing to do in a one-shot two-player PD would be to defect. This was shown above, and applies to both actors. If the actors are purely rational, there is actually no hope for getting another result if the game is a one shot two-player PD. What is the rational solution if there are more than two players, in a single shot game, or when there are more than two actors?

3.2.1 N-player PD played once

To give an illustrated example of what such a game would look like, Thomas C. Schelling and Henry Hamburger started to use what has since been known as Schelling-diagrams (Hovi, 1992:73). These diagrams show which possibilities an actor in an N-player game can choose between. In the case of PD, the possibilities are to co-operate, and to defect. A Schelling-diagram in PD looks like Figure 3.2, with a total of N actors and the same values of utility as presented in Figure 3.1:

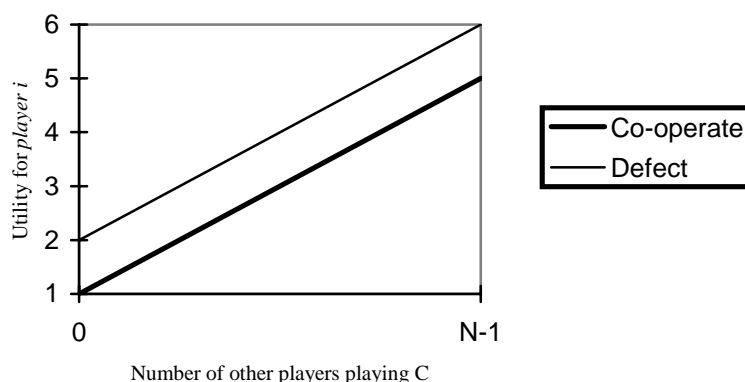


Figure 3.2: Schelling-diagram of N-player Prisoner's Dilemma. The lines indicates the different choices for player i . N = total number of players.

Figure 3.2 shows that for every alternative to co-operate, the alternative to defect gives a better result for the player in question (*player i*). This is, of course, true for all the players, since *player i* is any player in the given game at the time of decision. Thus, every player has a dominant strategy, and since every player plays this strategy, the game ends with all players defecting. In other words it does not matter if there are two or more players in a one shot PD. The result is the same, every player defects. The solution is therefore a NE.

3.2.2 Two-player repeated PD with a known time horizon

As shown above, it is rational to defect if the PD is played only once. What is rational in repeated PD? If we play PD twice, what would then be rational? In this case the principle of backwards induction can be used. This principle starts at the end of the game, examining what is the rational action there, and uses that information to deduce what is rational at the start of the game (Hovi & Rasch, 1997:70-71).

Therefore the following question appears: What can a player gain by co-operating in the final game? The same would also be true in the final round of the repeated games, as is true in a single shot game. Whatever both players choose to do in the first game, it would be rational for both players to defect in the last game. Then there is no incentive to co-operate. Thus it is rational to defect in the final round, whatever the moves are in the first game. To defect is therefore the dominant strategy of both players. Could this have an impact on what to do in the first game? If a player defects in the first round, what would be the rational thing to do in the second round for the opposite player? Likewise, if a player co-operates in the first round, what would be the rational thing to do in the second round for the opposite player? The answer would be, of course, to defect. This again would make it rational to defect in the first round. So to summarize what is rational in a two-player PD played twice, it is simply to defect twice for both players.

What happens in a PD with a time horizon of more than two rounds? As shown above the rational action would be to defect in the final round. It is also shown that it would

be rational to defect in the first round in a PD played twice. If another round were added before the first round (round zero), would it be rational to defect then as well? The answer is yes, it would be rational to defect. Whatever the moves are in the first round, it would be rational to defect in the final round. This is true also for round zero. What can either player do to make it rational to co-operate in round two? Whatever either player does in round zero, the rational move would be to defect in the first round. This would then again imply that it would be rational to defect in round zero. This logic goes for a two-player PD with a known time horizon. No matter how many times PD is played, it would always be rational to defect in every round, for both players.

This argument is also true in cases where (i) the actual number of rounds are unknown, but (ii) both players know the maximum number of rounds that will be played (Hovi, 1998:91-92). If the game had a time horizon of maximum ten games, and the players reached game ten, they would know the rational action is to defect. They would, of course, know this in the ninth round, and therefore deduce that it is rational to defect then as well. These arguments would be used all the way until the first round, and both players would end up with the strategy of defecting in every round played, no matter what the other player does.

There are ways to make it rational to co-operate in at least some of the games played. This can be done by making agreements. If the players entered into a self-enforcing agreement, it could be rational to act in a different way than what would normally be the rational action. A self-enforcing agreement is an agreement where none of the parties will deviate, without any other parties breaking it first (Hovi, 1998:78). This has to be achieved without the use of what Hovi refers to as “external enforcement mechanisms” (ibid.)¹⁰. Hovi (1998:98-99) gives a possible solution to how a repeated PD with a finite time horizon can be altered to make a self-enforced agreement

¹⁰ External enforcement mechanism is any mechanism that enforces an agreement with the use of (i) an issue not covered by the agreement, or (ii) any third party.

possible. If the actors in question were given a sanction alternative where they were able to cause harm, a self-enforcing agreement would be possible. Then a defection from the agreement can be effectively punished. In game theoretical terms this is explained by the new NE that gives us another possible equilibrium end to the game. A game of that kind could look something like the game presented in Figure 3.3 (ibid.):

		Actor II		
		Co-operate (C)	Defect (D)	Cause Harm (H)
Actor I	Co-operate (C)	5 5	1 6	-1 -1
	Defect (D)	6 1	2 2	-1 -1
	Cause Harm (H)	-1 -1	-1 -1	0 0

Figure 3.3: Prisoner's dilemma with three alternatives - A number in **bold** indicates the preferred choice given the other players choice, and a grey area indicates Nash Equilibrium (NE).

In this scenario, it is possible to achieve a self-enforcing agreement. If this game is played in two rounds, such an agreement might look like this (ibid.):

- First round, both players play C.
- In round two, if both players played C in the first round, then defect; if not, cause harm.

With this agreement, both players would end up with a total utility that is better than if either player chose to play D in round one: $U_I(C:C) = 5 + 2 = 7$

So, player one gets the total of seven, if he sticks to the agreement. The best alternative is if he defects (plays D) in the first round: $U_I(D:C) = 6 + 0 = 6$

If player one chooses to defect, he would only get six. Thus, it is rational for both players to stick to the agreement.

The agreement used as an example illustrates a point, but it has a flaw. If either player defected in the first round, that player can approach the other player and say that he made a mistake, and that neither of the actors benefits from him being punished. Therefore she can suggest that the other player could forgive her, since both players would benefit from it. Why would this be true? If player one defected in the first round, and was punished according to the agreement, the utility for both players would be: $U_I = 6 + 0 = 6$; $U_{II} = 1 + 0 = 1$

If, on the other hand, player two forgave player one for defecting, and agreed to continue as planned, the total for both actors would be: $U_I = 6 + 2 = 8$; $U_{II} = 1 + 2 = 3$

Thus, it would be rational for player two to forgive player one in this situation. This means that the initial agreement is not renegotiation proof (Hovi, 1998:126). This could again imply that it would be rational to defect.

There may be a solution to this problem. If we were to add some alternatives to the ones we already have, we could get a game that looks like Figure 3.4 (based upon a figure presented by Hovi (2002 [lecture])).

		Player 1									
		1A		1B		1C		1D		1E	
Player 2	2A	2	2	6	1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1
	2B	1	6	5	5	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1
	2C	-1	-1	-1	-1	0	0	-1	-1	-1	-1
	2D	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	0	1	-1	-1
	2E	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	1	0

Figure 3.4: Prisoner's dilemma with five alternatives - A number in **bold** indicates the preferred choice given the other players choice, and a grey area indicates Nash Equilibrium (NE).

The renegotiation proof equilibrium would then be the following in a two-round game (ibid.):

1. Play 1B:2B, then 1C:2C
2. If player 1 deviates from rule 1 in round one, then play 1E:2E
3. If player 2 deviates from rule 1 in round one, then play 1D:2D
4. If both players deviates from rule 1 in round one, then play 1C:2C

Whatever sub-game is played in the final round the game ends up in a NE; thus the outcome of the game is SPE. Since it will not be rational to renegotiate the agreement after the other player has deviated from the agreement, this game is also renegotiation proof (ibid.).

3.2.3 Two-player PD with an indefinite time horizon

How would rational actors act in an infinitely repeated game? The same question can be asked even if the game is not played infinitely, but where there is always a chance that the game will continue for another round. It is in these two cases that we have an indefinite time horizon (Hovi, 1998:93). The rational actor would probably prefer to defect in all rounds, because to defect is the dominant strategy in PD. This would translate into the fact that all rational actors would choose to defect in an ongoing conflict, similar to PD.

However, there can be alternatives to a situation marked by mutual defection. Again this alternative is self-enforcing agreements. Usually, there are two criteria for the possibility of establishing a self-enforcing agreement in PD. The first criterion is that the game is repeated an infinite number of times. The second is that the discount factor is sufficiently high (Hovi, 1998)¹¹. The first criterion of implementing a self-enforcing agreement in PD is met. What about the second criterion? To be able to

¹¹ The discount factor is a number between zero and one, and is the number the future gains of utility is multiplied with, for implementing the possibility that immediate gains can be more valuable than gains in the future.

achieve a self-enforcing agreement the discount factor must be sufficiently high to make it rational to keep the agreement.

To make this argument, it is assumed that both players co-operate until either of the players defect, and then they both defect in all consecutive rounds. In other words, both actors use the Grim Trigger strategy (GT). When the discount factor is higher than $(T - R) / (T - P)$ it is possible to reach a self-enforcing agreement that neither party will defect from unless the other actor defects first, provided they are rational (Hovi, 1998:78). Based on this knowledge we can deduce that in an indefinite two player PD, it can be rational to co-operate, if the other actor uses GT, and the discount factor is sufficiently high.

This solution, with some adjustments, can be made renegotiation proof. If the player were to add the following to their strategy, the solution will be renegotiation proof. If one player defects, the other player defects in every following round until the other player has co-operated (Hovi, 1998:127).

3.2.4 A repeated two-player PD, a repeated number of times

Would it be rational to defect in every round of every game an actor is playing? Robert Axelrod arranged a tournament where he invited game theorists to send in computer programs that would play repeated PD against each other (Axelrod, 1990). Each game was played for 200 rounds. The winner of the tournament was the simplest program. Professor Anatol Rapoport, a psychologist from the University of Toronto, submitted “Tit for Tat” (TFT), a program that plays PD after the following rules (Axelrod, 1990:31, 193):

- Always start by co-operating.
- Play what the other player played last round.

TFT is not rational in any separate game. It does not maximize its utility in the first game, or in any game following the first game. A player playing TFT does not even consider rational arguments when choosing which action to perform in each game,

hence it can be said to violate the definition of rationality by Elster presented in paragraph 2.1.2. TFT did not win any single games it played. The opponent always came out at least as good as TFT (Axelrod, 1990). When played against the different strategies submitted, no other strategy accumulated as high total score as TFT. Even when Axelrod invited to a second tournament¹², and had informed all participants about the results of the first tournament, TFT got the highest accumulated score. Thus it can be said that it is rational to use TFT as a strategy, in the long run, even though it is not rational to use it in any single shot game, or in any single repeated PD.

However, TFT has several flaws (Hovi, 2002 [lecture]). If one of two players who plays TFT against each other accidentally plays defect, the game will be spinning into a game where one player co-operates while the other defects, and vice versa the next round, and so on (Axelrod, 1994:172). TFT gives no solution to how co-operation can be restarted. Related to this is the second problem, the fact that TFT does not differentiate between defections that were unfounded, and defections that had some acceptable reason. Neither player can be a regretting sinner. The third problem is that a game where two players play TFT is not a renegotiation proof equilibrium. Finally there is the problem that a game with two TFT against each other is not a sub-game perfect equilibrium (SPE) (Myerson, 1991:326; Hovi, 2002 [lecture]).

There are alternatives to TFT. One of these is a strategy called “getting even” (Myerson, 1991:326-327). Simply told it is when any actor (*player i*) plays C unless the other actor has played D more times than *player i*. “Getting even” may also be SPE, given that the discount factor is sufficiently high (ibid.). According to Myerson there is not much to differentiate TFT from getting even, the differences only emerges after a player has accidentally defected, but tries to go back to his original strategy (ibid.).

¹² The second tournament was not played for exactly 200 rounds. Axelrod gave game a probability of 0.00346 to end after every round (Axelrod, 1994:42).

3.2.5 Conclusion on rationality in PD

In conclusion, in the simplest cases of PD, it is rational to defect. However, if PD is repeated, ways to make co-operation rational can be incorporated. This requires the actors to reach some kind of agreement. This can be a self-enforcing agreement. If a repeated PD is repeated, then Axelrod showed that co-operating can be rational, as a part of TFT, or by the “getting even” strategy as Myerson has suggested.

3.3 How to act ethical in a prisoner’s dilemma situation

How should the different actors act in these different settings according to ethical standards? That depends on which considerations one builds into the arguments.

3.3.1 Ethical choices in a single-shot two-player PD

If anyone should act morally in PD, they would obviously also want the other player to act morally. This could translate into the golden rule. With this basic moral thought as a basis for ethical consideration in PD, in a two-player PD played once, the ethical solution would be to co-operate with the other actor. Each player would wish that the other player co-operated, therefore he must co-operate too. According to the golden rule, the ethical action is to co-operate. This will be further discussed below. With this solution it would be a Parreto-optimal outcome, which is a paradox, since the rational choice results in a sub-optimal outcome (Hovi & Rasch, 1997:48).

Utilitarianism would seek to maximize the total utility for both players, and for both of them to co-operate would clearly give the best result for both. John Stuart Mill explains this idea:

“The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure” (Mill, 1996:1104).

Then he proceeds by specifying his concept of morally acceptable actions:

“[...] [P]leasure and freedom from pain, are the only things desirable as ends; and [...] all desirable things (which are as numerous as in any other scheme) are desirable either for the pleasure inherent in themselves, or as means to the promotion of pleasure and the prevention of pain” (Mill, 1996:1105)

Seemingly, John Stuart Mill does not define utility the same way as it is defined in this thesis. He uses the term primarily for individuals who should make a choice of action. However, if examined more closely, utility would be less pain, and more happiness to the individuals, or the means to get more happiness or less pain. The utility used in defining preferences in this thesis is the total amount of good or evil an actor (for example a state) will receive in that particular game. Although this good is not intended to be metaphysical in its definition, it imposes no problem because Mill could counter that monetary or other gain could again be used to gain a higher degree of pleasure. As a result of this, there is not presumed to be any conflict between the utilitarian definition of utility and the definition given earlier in this thesis. Thus, utilitarianism is here interpreted as the combined utility of all players in the game (as opposed to the rational actions, which are the single utility of each player, respectively).

With this in mind, utilitarianism supports the answer to the question, with a two-player PD played once. In accordance with utilitarianism we are trying to maximize the utility of both players. Taking note of the game presented in Figure 3.1, and assuming that the utilities are compatible, i.e. a utility of one equals a utility of one for the other player, the obvious choice would be to co-operate, if the other player co-operates. This would give a total utility of 10, whereas to defect, while the other player co-operates would only give a total utility of seven. If the other player defects, the ethical choice would be to co-operate, giving a total utility of seven, instead of only four, if both players defected. According to utilitarianism, both players have a dominant strategy, and should therefore both co-operate independently of each other. If the utilities are incompatible, they should be recalculated to be compatible. Otherwise the math of utilitarianism does not reach the right conclusion.

How should an actor act if the other actor defects? If the moves are simultaneous, then the actor does not know whether or not the other actor defects. This is the dilemma of PD. In such a case, the actor should co-operate, as has been argued above. The golden rule says to do what you want the other actor to do. So whatever the other actor does, to co-operate is the ethical right action, if that is what you want the other actor to do. The golden rule as such gives no exception to this.

Using utilitarian arguments playing C:D gives a total utility for both of seven in the previous example, while D:D only gives a total utility for both players of four. If one were to co-operate even though one knew that the other actor would defect, this could translate into an “all C” strategy. This would send a player knowingly into sucker’s payoff (the least attractive end of a PD); both utilitarianism and the golden rule states that one should nevertheless co-operate. In the international arena, this would in turn be to the disadvantage of the citizens of the nation in question (its national interest). Even if the actor has responsibilities on the international arena, one should not forget the needs of one’s own people in such a situation. Thus, with regards to the national interest, one must use discretion, when on a case by case basis determining whether or not to co-operate. This is meant as an exception, though, and one should choose not to defect lightly.

What if it is probable, but not absolutely certain that one actor defects? In this case the actor should preferably co-operate. Using the golden rule as a guideline, one should also co-operate, as it would be if it was absolutely certain that the other actor defects. Using utilitarian arguments the same argument emerges, as when using the golden rule. If it is right to co-operate if the other actor co-operates, and it is right to co-operate if the other actor defects, then it must be right to co-operate if it is uncertain whether or not the other actor co-operates.

The probability of the other actor’s defection would have to be taken into consideration, though, given the argument of the national interest. Then it would be at the actor’s discretion to decide whether or not to co-operate. It would not be ethically permissible for the decision maker to completely disregard the national interest if it

were reasonably certain that the other actor would defect. However, one should not resort too easily to defection, as it clearly is the impermissible choice if the national interest is removed from the scenario.

These arguments are made given that $2R > S + T$. If we remove that as a premise we would get different conclusions. The utilitarian argument is determined by the utility in the game. The golden rule would, however, not change its arguments. The national interest is not discussed here, as it is only meant as an exception, and not a rule on its own.

		Actor II	
		Co-operate (C)	Defect (D)
Actor I	Co-operate (C)	3 3	1 9
	Defect (D)	9 1	2 2

Figure 3.5: Altered Prisoner's dilemma - A number in **bold** indicates the preferred choice given the other players choice, and a grey area indicates Nash Equilibrium (NE).

With the game presented in Figure 3.5 it would be a better action to defect if the other actor co-operates. This would give the players a total utility of 10, while the total utility would only be six if both co-operated. Given utilitarian arguments, this game has no solution. If actor I defects, then actor II should co-operate. Thus there is no dominant strategy. Altering the rules could dramatically change the utilitarian arguments.

3.3.2 Ethical choices in a single-shot N-player PD

What difference does it make if there are more than two players? One could imagine that the choices are similar to when there are only two players. In a two-player game the golden rule indicated that each player should co-operate, because every player wanted the other player to co-operate, and because we should act, as we want others

to act, then we must co-operate if we want others to co-operate. How does each player want the other players to act in an N-player game? Every player would want the other players to co-operate because that would give the highest utility. Because of this, every player should then also co-operate. According to the golden rule, there is no difference in how a player should act in an N-player version of PD, versus a two-player PD, played once.

How does utilitarianism tell us to act? In this case utilitarianism alone is not as easy and intuitive to apply. However, there are a couple of points that can be made. What yields the highest utility of an N-player PD? Let us examine it using four players, and the utilities are $S=1$, $R=5$, $P=2$, $T=6$. If all players defect, the total utility would be: $4 * 2 = 8$. If all players co-operate the total utility would be: $4 * 5 = 20$. Obviously a total utility of twenty is greater than a total utility of eight. Thus, it is better for every player to co-operate, than for every player to defect. Again, the golden rule can be referred to. If I want to act in a certain way, I would also want others to act the same way. In this scenario this would imply that every player should act the same way. This would turn the ethical choice into a choice between two different choices, do I want every player in this game to co-operate, or do I want them to defect? If the answer to this question is to co-operate then I should co-operate, and likewise if the answer is to defect I should defect. Utilitarianism tells me that it would give the highest total utility if all players co-operated, rather than defected, so that is what I should do.

If some but not all players co-operate, what would be the right thing to do? Would it be ethical to co-operate, thus becoming suckers, and receiving payoff as such. Or is it permissible to defect if other players do not co-operate? Several different answers can be made to this question. However, since the golden rule has been used as a normative ethical guide, then it should apply here as well. The golden rule states that every actor should do what is preferred by that actor to be done by the other actors. Thus the ethical choice is to co-operate, even if this is not done by the other actors.

As with the basic one-shot two-player PD, this game can be altered. Usually a game such as this looks like Figure 3.2, however one may imagine a game without linear utility. An example of this is given in Figure 3.6.

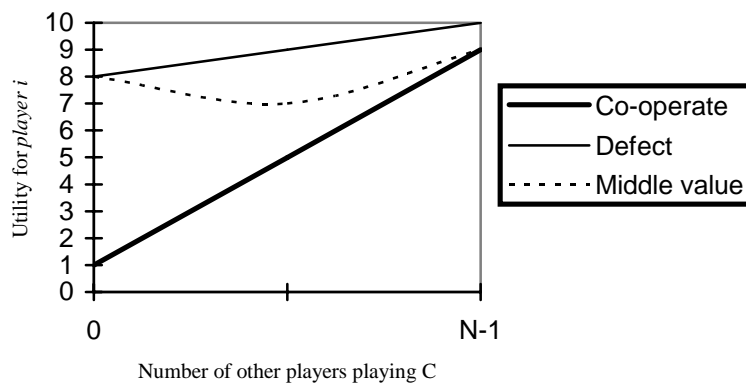


Figure 3.6: Schelling-diagram of N-player Prisoner's Dilemma. The lines indicates the different choices for player i . The middle value is the average utility of all players given that choice.

Figure 3.6 is an example, based on a figure presented in Elster (1985), to how this may look like without the linear utility. This game would look like Figure 3.7 in a two-player game.

In this example, in a two-player game, the argument would be the same as it was presented in paragraph 3.3.1. However, in an N-player PD, it would be ethical to defect if it was before the middle value is at its negative peak. If one is beyond that point, it would be ethical to co-operate. This illustrates that when the rules are changed, so does the utilitarian argument and defection may be the preferred choice. This also illustrates that an N-player game may have different, and more complex, answers to the question, what is ethical, than could be provided by a single-shot two-player game.

Actor II

Co-operate (C)	Defect (D)
-------------------	---------------

Actor I	Co-operate (C)	9 9	1 10
	Defect (D)	1 10	8 8

Figure 3.7: Basic Prisoner's dilemma - A number in **bold** indicates the preferred choice given the other players choice, and a grey area indicates Nash Equilibrium (NE).

3.3.3 Ethical choices in a repeated two-player PD

This is where there are only two players and they are going to interact in PD a number of times known to both players. The ethical arguments in this scenario will be the same as in the basic one-shot scenario. Thus the ethically right choice is to co-operate in every round, from the first to the last.

What about a PD with two actors playing an indefinite number of times? It can be regarded as a self-enforcing agreement if the discount factor is sufficiently high. Thus both players can choose between the rational choice of not co-operating, and the rational choice of playing GT¹³. If only one player plays GT, that player would get cheated in the first round. Here the players actually have a choice. The obvious choice, if you wanted to act purely morally would be to co-operate. The arguments stated above would also have validity in this context. Thus the ethically right action is to co-operate even if the discount factor is too low for the establishment of a self-enforcing agreement. Again this is due to the basics of the golden rule. An actor should not act how she wishes the other actor not to act.

The argument according to utilitarianism would be that it is the total utility accomplished that should guide the way. The argument would be the same in a repeated game, as it is in a single shot game, because the utility is the same in a repeated game. It is only distributed more times. The total utility in all games will, of course, be the deciding factor.

If the game is repeated, which strategies would be acceptable from a moral point of view? The answer would have to be to co-operate unless the actors agree otherwise. If this were the case, then the right action would, of course, be to honour this agreement. However, if one of the actors were forced into an agreement, then it could possibly be acceptable to break it. These problems lie inside a grey area, and are difficult to answer on a general basis, but should be answered case by case.

3.3.4 Ethical choices in a repeated two-player PD, played repeatedly

As shown above, the rational action if a repeated PD were repeated a number of times, was to play TFT. What would be ethically correct in this situation? In such a situation a player would want every other player to co-operate in every game played. This would be right according to the golden rule. TFT gives us the opportunity to achieve co-operation in every round of every game we played. Whether or not TFT is a good ethical choice will be easier to see if we look at it from another point of view. If the other player cheated (defected) in a game against you, would you want to retaliate? It might be fair to say that you would want to retaliate. Otherwise the opponent could become greedy and cheat you more. Thus, your opponent must also be allowed to retaliate against you if you cheated him. How does either your opponent or you retaliate? You do this by defecting in the next round of play. This is exactly what TFT does. It co-operates until the other player has defected, then it defects until the other player co-operates. This is not only rational, but also an ethical way of engaging in a repeated PD, a repeated number of times. This applies to the “getting even” strategy as well.

Using utilitarianism here would be using the same argument as utilitarianism has preached before. Whatever the other player does, the utilitarian action would be to co-operate. This would give the two actors combined the highest utility. Hence, one

¹³ As stated in paragraph 3.2.3, GT= Grim Trigger

could simply play “all c”. This could place the utilitarian in a constant state of sucker’s payoff, but that is the drawback of strict utilitarianism.

3.3.5 Conclusion on ethics vs rationality in PD

Although co-operation is the ethically preferred choice in PD, this is a bit nuanced. Utilitarianism gives other answers if the rules or the utility are changed. In addition, the actors in the international arena must not lose sight of the national interest. This implies that one should co-operate in PD-like situations unless one can establish with a relative amount of certainty that the other actor defects. Then one could, or even, in extreme cases, should, defect. It is the national interest, and the needs of the citizens of one’s own nation that allows defection in these cases. The option of defecting is meant as an exception rather than a rule of its own, since the primary obligation is always to co-operate. It should also be emphasized that altering the rules of PD could dramatically change these arguments and conclusions.

3.4 How does one actually act in prisoner’s dilemma?

Several different social psychology experiments have been conducted on PD. According to Méro (1998:44) their results have varied somewhat. However, there are some trends that we see in a majority of the studies. In a one-shot PD, on average approximately 40 % co-operates (Méro, 1998:45). In experiments done in a group that has a history together, the results reflected the different roles the individuals have in that group, e.g. the dominant members defected more than the submissive members, who again tended to co-operate (ibid.).

If the game has several rounds, the amount of co-operation actually increases. In some experiments, the average amount of co-operation increased to almost 60 % (Méro, 1998:46). However, the participants used to end up “mired in competition” (ibid.). Another interesting feature is that in a PD with several rounds, features of TFT appeared, but never TFT as it won Axelrods tournament (ibid.).

Yet another interesting feature in experiments is that economists generally co-operate less than other people (Frank et al., 1993). This can be attributed to the fact that economists are trained in rational thinking, and therefore behave according to what is rational and thus pay less attention to, for example, ethical considerations. Another possibility might be that economy appeals to a certain kind of individual that behaves more according to rational thought than the average man or woman. Although Frank et al.'s findings were disputed by Yezer et al. (1996)¹⁴ ; later studies have come to the same conclusion (Frank et al., 1996). In the latter experiment, Frank et al. found that economics attracts a certain kind of person. After controlling for different variables as gender and class, economics students still defect more often than non-economics students. However, males defect more often compared to females, than economics students compared to non-economics students. This leads to the conclusion that although economists do behave more rationally and thus less ethically some of this is due to the personality of those who become economists, and some is due to other traits as e.g. gender.

One should be careful not to draw conclusions from this to the wrong level. These numbers are presented on a personal basis, while this thesis primarily deals with the international level. However, individuals make decisions even at the international level, so these numbers may be used as an indicator to how they may act, when presented with a PD-like scenario.

¹⁴ Yezer et al. (1996) tested to see whether or not economics (and non-economics) students returned unsealed letters containing ten \$1 bills which were dropped in classrooms. They found that economics students returned these letters more often than non-economics students, and drew the conclusion that economics students were not bad citizens.

3.5 Summary and conclusion

3.5.1 Summary

I have studied the relationship between rationality and ethics in different varieties of PD. To be able to discuss this with any substance, I had to define rationality as separated from ethics. It would then be possible to see any gap between these two terms. Rational behaviour calls for no co-operation in PD. An exception to this is a self-enforcing agreements (or other agreement that can be enforced), and TFT. It would then be rational to co-operate at least in some of the rounds in the game. In answering the ethical part of my question I have found that the ethical choice in most cases differs from the rational choice. I have found that co-operation is the ethical right action in most cases. There is one possible exception, both in my findings in the rational and the ethical choices, and that is in repeated PD with an indefinite time horizon. Then it can be said to be both rational and ethical to play TFT or GT.

Although this may be in breach with the rational standards in any single game, in the long run it is both rational, as it maximizes utility over time and ethically defensible as it promotes co-operation.

I have also shown that experiments have indicated that there is more co-operation in PD than rational behaviour prescribes. Whether these results are because ethics played a part is difficult to say with any certainty at this stage.

3.5.2 Conclusion

In PD the gap between ethics and rationality is manifested when rational considerations primarily promote defection and ethical considerations promote co-operation. However, using utilitarian arguments, changing the rules would affect the ethically preferred choice.

To conclude, I would like to refer to what was mentioned in a previous paragraph. The findings are that people tend to co-operate more than rational behaviour

prescribes. Given this, there must be some other considerations, and my argument is that there is some degree of morality inside the minds of those who are in PD-like situations. This may be why they co-operate in about 40 % of the cases.

4. Ethics and Rationality in Ultimatum and Dictator Games

This chapter will start with a short introduction to ultimatum and dictator games. It will be shown what constitutes these games, and how they can be solved, i.e. what is rational in these games. The ethical aspect; how one could, and should, take ethical considerations in these games will then be explored. Whether one should act morally or rationally in these games, or if they can, indeed, be combined, will then be discussed. Finally, how people have acted in experiments will be shown in order to give a basis for comparison. Paragraphs 4.3.3 and 4.3.4 are normative in their nature.

When egoism is discussed, it is not meant in its strictest terms. When a player chooses the gains of his nation over other gains, it is defined as egoism. It is not supposed here that the international arena is an arena for personal gains.

It is supposed, unless otherwise stated, that both actors are equal in both contributions and needs. And it is presupposed, again unless otherwise stated, that there are only one game played at a time.

4.1 Ultimatum and dictator games

Ultimatum games and dictator games in general will be introduced in this paragraph. What do these games look like, and what characterizes them? What is rational in these games?

Ultimatum games are interesting to study, because it is a game type that looks at negotiations and co-operations. Dictator games are a variant of ultimatum games and are interesting because we can see whether or not the actor acts purely rationally when faced with that opportunity. If they do not, the claim made by some theorists, that the international arena does not contain any other considerations than the national interest, is at best modified.

4.1.1 Ultimatum games

Ultimatum games can be recognized by the trait that one actor presents an ultimatum (“ n ”) to the other actor who then has the choice to accept or decline. It can be a total sum of payoff to be divided between two actors. The utility varies from zero to one where zero is nothing and one is all.

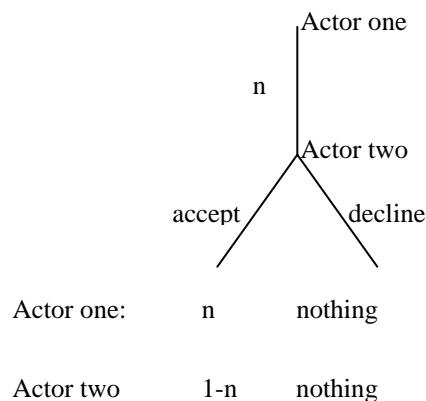


Figure 4.1: Ultimatum game – Actor one proposes “ n ” which equals any number between 0 and 1.

If actor two, in the game in Figure 4.1, declines the offer, both will receive nothing. However, if actor two accepts the offer, payoff is as indicated.

In ultimatum games, as the one presented in Figure 4.1, the rational actor would accept any offer which gives more utility than nothing. This will amount to anything at all, say 0.001. In turn this would imply that an offer of $n=0.999$ would be rational to offer. Thus the game ends at actor one receiving 0.999 and actor two receiving 0.001.

4.1.2 Dictator games

The difference between ultimatum and dictator games is that in dictator games, player two does not get any choice but to accept the offer made by player one. This can be showed as Figure 4.2.

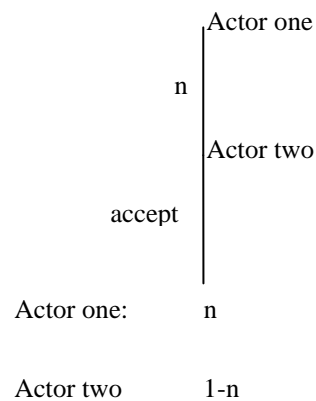


Figure 4.2: Dictator game – Actor one proposes “ n ” which equals any number between 0 and 1.

It may be said that a dictator is not a game in strict game theoretic terms. A game is, at least in part, recognized by having interaction, and a dictator game contains only one action, thus there is no *interaction*, as actor two cannot choose how to respond. However, in this chapter the dictator game will be analyzed using the same tools as a game, and will be treated as such.

As in an ultimatum game, the rational action for player one in a dictator game is to take as much as possible. This would amount to everything, i.e. $n=1$. Player two cannot do anything to stop him, hence player two does not need to receive anything, given player one’s rationality. Thus the rational outcome of this game is actor one receives 1 (all) and actor two receives 0 (nothing).

4.2 Ethical actions in ultimatum and dictator games

What would be the correct action given ethical considerations? Intuitively, this would imply some differences, as indeed was the case on PD. How will these differences appear in these games? As in the previous chapter, utilitarianism will be used as a measurement of ethical behaviour, as well as the golden rule. In this chapter, John Rawls will also be presented. Some of his thoughts will be discussed in this setting.

4.2.1 Ethical actions in dictator games

A dictator game is truly a test of ethical behaviour. The dictator (actor one) has the power to grab the entire pot. He does not have to take in account any other considerations than his own. Whatever he chooses to propose, will be the result of the game. This makes this discussion interesting.

In dictator games there is only one action that can be examined. This is the offer made by actor one. According to utilitarianism the primary goal is to secure the highest possible total of good. In a dictator game, this is equal to all possible outcomes, because every outcome has the same total utility ($=1$). The pot is equal to one, whatever actor one chooses to propose. A second goal can be to try to even out the good as much as possible. John Rawls says in his analysis of utilitarianism that a utilitarian “appeals to equality only to break ties” (Rawls, 1999:67). To achieve equality is done by offering 0.5 to each. Hence, the utilitarian offer would be to set $n=0.5$. This is, however, only marginally better than $n=1$, or even $n=0$ for that matter.

John Rawls criticizes the utilitarian view. Utilitarianism, taken to its extreme, can make individuals suffer (Føllesdal, 1993:441). According to Rawls one cannot disregard individuals’ rights. Utilitarianism disregards these rights by primarily focusing on the total happiness. In the slaveholders argument Rawls (1999:145) gives an example to how this might be. A slaveholder, when confronted by his slaves, might say that the institution of slaves promotes the total happiness, and is therefore the right thing to do. Rawls’ formulates his alternatives to this stand in terms of the maximin rule (Rawls, 1999). He defined this rule like this:

“[w]e are to adopt the alternative the worst outcome of which is superior to the worst outcomes of the others” (Rawls, 1999:133)

In other words, according to this rule, the action that gives the best possible outcome, for the actor receiving the worst outcome, is the right action. Since in the NE actor two receives less in an ultimatum game, than actor one, actor two is the one to be considered. Therefore, actor two’s payoff should be maximized, to the point where it reaches 0.5. If actor two receives more than 0.5, then actor one would be the actor

receiving less, thus be the one to be considered. This would end in a game where both actors receive 0.5.

The golden rule has another solution, though. If actor two was the dictator, actor one would want actor two to offer all to actor one. This would imply, using the golden rule, that actor one should give an offer of $n=0$, thus giving all to player two. Hence, using the golden rule, one should give all to the other player, when given the choice. This may seem extreme, as it indeed is.

4.2.2 Ethical actions in ultimatum games

In an ultimatum game, one must examine two actions. Both these actions can be evaluated according to ethical standards. Firstly, it is the offer made by actor one. Secondly, it is the choice of whether or not actor two accepts the offer.

What does the golden rule tell us to do in an ultimatum game? To answer this, one must turn the game around. Then player two in an ultimatum game would prefer that player one accepted an offer made by player two. Therefore, player two should accept any offer that player one makes. Which offer should player one make? If player one were receiving an offer from player two, player one would want that offer to be as large as possible. This would amount to everything. The offer should thus be everything to player two ($n=0$) which player two would accept.

Switching focus to utilitarianism, the most important focus is that an agreement is reached. Without an agreement both parties lose. Of course, the more equal the outcome is for both parties, the better it is, but the main issue is to get an agreement. Given this, it is defensible, for player one, to propose $n=0.999$. If one is trying to achieve equality as well as the highest possible good, one would propose $n=0.5$. Being purely utilitarian, the difference between $n=0.5$ and $n=0.999$ is minimal. The big difference is between reaching an agreement and not reaching an agreement. Thus, the result is a 50-50 split to each actor.

As in dictator games, John Rawls' maximin rule would apply in ultimatum games as well. The outcome would be the same as well: 0.5 to the actor receiving less, thus 0.5 to both players.

4.2.3 Conclusion on ethics in ultimatum and dictator games

To conclude, the ethically right action would simply be for actor one to set $n=0.5$ and for actor two to accept that offer. Setting $n=0.5$ would satisfy John Rawls' maximin rule. It would also be an acceptable action seen with utilitarian eyes, although only marginally better than $n=0$ or $n=1$. In utilitarianism the main objective is to reach an agreement, and this responsibility lies primarily with actor two. According to a strict interpretation of the golden rule, actor one should set $n=0$.

4.3 Ethics or rationality in ultimatum and dictator games?

It has now been explored what is rational and what is ethical in these games. In this paragraph these different choices will be further explored and compared. Whether or not there is any way to compare them will be discussed first. Then there will be a discussion on what choices to make in cases where ethics and rationality are incompatible.

4.3.1 Can an action be both rational and ethical in ultimatum and dictator games?

As has been showed above, rational behaviour and ethical behaviour could sometimes give very different results. Is there a way for both to work together? This was discussed in chapter 2 above. Reinhold Niebuhr was the one who had the most interesting ideas on this subject.

Reinhold Niebuhr's thoughts can be summarized as was done in paragraph 2.4.3. National interest often guides the actions in the international arena, but sometimes it is necessary to apply some ethical standards to these actions. This can for instance be

the decision not to start a nuclear holocaust, in order to preserve man. Another example can be the different international conventions that exist, such as the Geneva Conventions.

Why is this relevant in ultimatum and dictator games? In game theory, we normally only consider rational actions. However, if the actors manage to consider both ethical standards and the rational aspect (national interests) this would then be a way to combine these standards in these games. Taking ethical considerations could give other results than those predicted by ordinary game theory. These differences can help explain actions that deviate from those predicted using only rationality. In this, the thoughts of Reinhold Niebuhr may provide some valid points.

4.3.2 National interest as motivation in ultimatum and dictator games

If one purely acts with motivation in personal gain, one would always have to maximize one's own payoff. In these terms that implies that player one offer $n=0.999$, in a ultimatum game, and $n=1$ in a dictator game. This has two effects that can be seen as disadvantages. Firstly, it means that the gain in an agreement lies with player one, since player two ends up with basically nothing; or nothing as the case is in dictator games. Secondly, it seems a very poor way to distribute common gains.

On the other hand, it can be argued that acting after ethical standards can be self-destructive in the international community. Therefore it is seems reasonable to try to reach some middle ground. To do this, one must be able to have two lines of thought working at the same time. One would have to keep track of both the ethical standards and the national interest¹⁵. The reasoning before an action takes place could then look something like this: "If I do not disregard the needs of my people, what is the right thing to do in this case?" The focal point of this sentence is "the needs of my people".

¹⁵ National interest can be seen in several different ways. Here national interest is used in the meaning welfare and growth of the people in question. Not territorial, economic or other expansion, to further the power of the nation as such.

If one were to act solely on the grounds presented in the discussion of the golden rule above, one would clearly disregard the needs of one's people. So, if one chooses to use the golden rule as a standard for ethical behaviour, it should be somewhat modified.

This modification could be something like this: The reasoning in paragraphs 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 is based on the assumption that player two is purely rational. This could be altered slightly. By introducing a sense of fairness into the equation, the conclusion would be altered. The argument would then be that player one would regard player two as being fair in addition to being rational. This would give player one the opportunity to keep something to himself. The reason is that player two would have wanted player one to keep something, being fair, in addition to being rational.

4.3.3 What should motivate actions in an ultimatum and a dictator game?

It seems obvious that thinking only of the national interest is not the right way to act. This could lead to a situation where every need in the world, except one's own, is totally disregarded. These needs might include famine, ecological disaster and devastating war. Acting only according to other-regarding ethical standards does not seem realistic in the international sphere either. It is not even certain that one would prefer that everyone in a community (e.g. the international community) should act after the golden rule, as it has been presented earlier. This leaves one important question. What should motivate actions in ultimatum and dictator games?

Using a combination would probably be a feasible idea. How would an ultimatum game look like if both the needs to take care of the national interest and the wish to do what is right are taken into consideration? One must obviously avoid one of the two extremes. These extremes are only considering either ethics or rationality. One would have to reach an acceptable solution in the middle. Given that both players are equal in needs and contribution, the fair solution would be to divide the payoff 50-50. This can be seen as a slightly modified version of the golden rule. The basic rule

stands as it is, but the reasoning is somewhat changed: “What would I wish that the other player did to me, if I were in his shoes; given that he also had to take care of his own national interest?” The answer here would, of course, be: “To offer me half, and to keep the second half himself”. This would thus be the solution.

John Rawls answer is that whatever gives the best outcome to the actor receiving least is the preferable action. This would be $n=0.5$. It would thus seem that $n=0.5$ would be the ethical choice. Both the amended golden rule and the maximin rule give this answer.

4.3.4 What if the players are unequal in needs and contribution?

Utility and dictator games primarily discuss the payoff. In an agreement there is also a need to consider the respective contributions. Even if the players are equal in every aspect, the sum of their contribution may be different. Likewise, even if they contribute equally, they may differ in needs. In these scenarios, how should one act?

One can easily imagine how to distribute between two actors that are unequal in needs. If country A is prosperous and thriving, and country B is in danger of a famine, it would seem obvious that country B receives most, everything else being equal. A 50-50 split would not seem right, even if both parties contributed equally. According to the maximin principle of John Rawls, one should always act so as to maximize the payoff for the least advantaged part (Rawls, 1999). In extreme cases, this would allocate all payoff to country B. This seems fair, but requires altruism from player A. Sometimes this is the case, as are shown in devastating disasters, when most prosperous countries give aid. This would also be the right action according to the Golden Rule.

If the players are unequal in contribution but everything else is equal, it does not intuitively seem right to give them equal payoff. However, this is more complicated if examined more closely. Say player one contributes $4/5$. These contributions might be investments that must be made, to fulfil the agreement. It might also be paying for

supervising the agreement or other costs that arise as part of the agreement. Then it seems fair that player one receives $\frac{4}{5}$ of the payoff. This does not seem as obvious if player two contributed with all possible resources available to player two. Likewise, it does not seem fair if player two contributed with something player one could not contribute with. If one of these cases were true, it could seem fair that player two receives a larger share of the payoff than $\frac{1}{5}$. Another point to make is that the agreement is only valid if player two gives his consent. This consent could be also be rewarded.

The utilitarian answer would be to achieve an agreement. The agreement that promotes the greatest happiness overall, would be preferable. Utilitarian thought does not take difference in contribution into account.

The golden rule would here again state (taken to its extreme) that player two receive the entire payoff. Player one's argument would be the same as if the needs and contribution are equal. However, if the looser interpretation of "the golden rule" is used, then the answer would be slightly different. Player two should accept that player one receives something for the contribution to this agreement. Thus player one would give part of the payoff to itself. This would be morally acceptable, since one should not forget the needs of one's own people.

In what way the payoff should be distributed is another question. It is established that both players should receive part of the payoff. How much of the payoff should each part receive? According to the needs, would be a natural answer. If the people of player one (country one) is starving, and the people of player two (country two) is thriving, it would be natural to distribute the payoff of the agreement to the advantage of the starving people. If country two is starving, player two would want player one to agree to more of the payoff to player two.

If player two contributed with all investments, it would seem unfair to let player one get the entire payoff. It could be felt by player two that they are paying for player one's payoff. Contributions can be repaid, though. This would put both players back

were they started. It would then only be the profit, or the total payoff subtracted the investments, that would be distributed. Doing this, how the payoff should be split would be up to the different needs of the actors. Preferably, this should be done while still rewarding the initial investments. By giving the richer nation a chance to more gains by doing good, would be to appeal to greediness. This could stimulate further investments later on, to achieve an even more good. However, the “needs of the needy” should get priority over the “greed of the greedy”.

Another point to be made is how the context may affect the picture. All examples above is under the assumption that it is the only game played. If two games of a similar kind is played simultaneously the arguments could be different. If both actors were actor one in one game and actor two in the other, one could argue that the rational solution (the NE) in both games respectively, is also the ethical choice. Then both players would receive equal payoff of the two games combined. This would be acceptable both according to the maximin rule, the utilitarian demand of highest total payoff and the golden rule. The argument of the latter would be something like this: “I would want the other player to act rational in the other game, therefore that is what I should do in this game”.

4.3.5 Conclusion on morality in ultimatum and dictator games

What is actually the ethically right choice in an ultimatum game is difficult to say. It seems obvious, though, that one should seek to get an agreement which is fair. Using the golden rule, the answer could be interpreted to be everything to the other player. The players on the international arena play the game, not only on their own behalf, but on behalf of the citizens as well. This makes the picture more complicated, but easy enough to comment on. One should act so as to distribute the payoff of an agreement according to needs. This should, however, not go so far as being at the expense of the national interest. In other words, one should not forget the needs of one's own people. If the needs are equal, the distribution should be equal.

4.4 Observed behaviour in ultimatum and dictator games

Now the theory has been explored, but how do subjects actually act when presented with such a scenario as ultimatum and dictator game situations? In this paragraph experiments on this issue will be explored. First the general findings will be showed. Then the discussion is whether or not morality plays a part in these findings.

Although most experiments of this kind are economic in their nature, they deal primarily with individuals that are acting. However, on the international arena it is individuals that act, although on behalf of others. Therefore it is presupposed that findings from these experiments can be applied to international politics as well.

4.4.1 General findings

In an experiment referred to by Richard Thaler (1988) the researcher found that 7 of 21 cases ended in a 50%-50% split. The mean result was 37 % offered to player two. After one week the same recipients went through the experiment again. This time the mean result was 23 % offered to player two. Only two players offered an even split the second time around.

Thaler gives two possible solutions to why players act differently than was predicted by game theory. He proposes that they can either be worried that an unfair proposition will be rejected, or they can have some sense of fairness (Thaler, 1988:197). He believes that both explanations can be plausible. However, only two players offered an even split the second time. This could indicate that they were not trying to be fair. They did just not think how extreme they could be in these experiments, the first time around.

In this experiment, one positive offer was rejected, in addition to an offer of nothing, at the first try. However, at the second try a week later a total of 5 offers were rejected. Thaler gives an answer to why players reject offers that will give them some income. He quotes a player saying that he would rather get nothing, than being part of an unfair agreement (Thaler, 1988: 197). This could indicate that people want other

people to act fairly to them. Other possible explanations might be envy and jealousy. People are envious and jealous on the players that outsmarted themselves, or others, and show this by declining the agreement.

4.4.2 Are players being fair in ultimatum and dictator games?

Alvin Roth discusses whether or not players are trying to be fair in these games. He mentions several different experiments that have explored this subject (Roth, 1995:270-274). The findings are that people are generally not trying to be fair. This conclusion is reached, in part based on the following assumption. If one is trying to be fair in an ultimatum game, one would probably act the same way under the different circumstances that constitutes a dictator game. Forsythe et al. (ibid.) compared ultimatum games and dictator games. They conclude that fairness is not a primary explanation to how one act in these games. However, Kahneman et al (ibid.) came to a different conclusion. In their experiment, they used a basic ultimatum game. After this game, they gave the subjects a choice to share a small amount of money with another player. The outcome depended on their choice, based on the first ultimatum game. They could choose to split \$5 with a player who divided evenly. Or they could choose to split \$6 with a player who divided unevenly. The rational choice would be to choose \$6, since that would generate more payoff for the subjects. However, the results were that the majority of the subjects chose the \$5 offer. This did not apply to those who themselves had offered an uneven amount in the previous game. Bradley Ruffle (1998) discusses the same topic. He concludes that actors are fairer when there is no anonymity.

“When anonymity does not exist and gift amounts are observable and attributable to specific givers, then social pressures, moral imperatives, and the warm glow of giving are likely to magnify the reward to skillful or deserving Recipients” (Ruffle, 1998:259)

4.4.3 Conclusion on experiments

It has been shown that people do not act in the way predicted by rational theory. Instead of proposing a minimal payoff to the other actor, 30%-40% is proposed as average. Indeed, instead of accepting any bid over nothing, some bids are turned down by actor two. This shows that it is not only rationality, narrowly understood, that motivates in these situations. What are it then that motivates action?

The answer to that question may be fairness. The question about whether or not people are fair, thus behaving ethically, is slightly more complicated. As Ruffle concluded, people tend to act more according to moral standards when their actions are observable. People also tend to act more ethically than what rational theory predicts. This was shown by Kahnemann. However, this is contradicted by the experiment of Roth. He found that people were not trying to be fair.

One possible interpretation of these results can be the following: People tend to act morally if they are observed. If they cannot be observed, they act morally if that can be done without too great cost. If the players at the receiving end feel unfairly treated, they tend to decline the agreement.

4.5 Summary and conclusion

4.5.1 Summary

In this chapter morality and rationality in ultimatum and dictator games have been discussed. After presenting these basic games, it has been shown what is rational. The rational action has been shown to be to propose an as large amount as possible to himself, i.e. almost all to himself in an ultimatum game, and all to himself in a dictator game. The receiver would accept any offer giving a larger sum than nothing.

It was then shown what is moral. The ethical choice depends on which moral theory one follows. According to utilitarianism the main objective is to achieve an

agreement. This is done by making player two accept the proposal of player one. Utilitarianism would also want an agreement that is as fair as possible. Hence, a 50-50 split of the payoff would be desirable. The golden rule can indicate that everything should be given to the other player. However, if one also considers the national interest in the golden rule, it can be used as a more moderate ethical guide. Given this adjustment it would also advice on a 50-50 split of the payoff. This would also be Rawls' answer to the ultimatum game.

That is the theory. In real life, we see that people may behave after other standards than the purely rational. This may in some case be attributed to ethics. Experiments have shown that there is difference between what rationality predicts and how people behave. They tend to behave more according to ethical standards, although not fully morally, as has been described in this chapter.

4.5.2 Conclusion

To incorporate ethical standards into ultimatum and dictator games is possible. It can be done in several different ways. It would be best for both players to reach an agreement with which both are satisfied with. This should be a 50-50 split, everything else being equal. Special needs should also be taken into consideration. One should also take context into consideration in these cases. However, incorporation of ethical standards does not translate into giving the entire payoff to the other player. In the international arena one must not forget the needs of one's own people, the national interest. Thus when acting in international politics, one must maintain several lines of thought at the same time.

5. Is Morality a Wrapping for Rational Actions?

Often one can see various state leaders attribute morality to their actions. Just because they argue that an action is the right one does not imply that it is the right action, though. If one can argue that an action is morally acceptable, it does not mean that it actually is the preferred ethical choice. This leads to the question whether or not morality can work as a “wrapping” for otherwise rational actions.

This chapter will discuss whether or not ethics is used merely to conceal or disguise an original agenda, primarily when this agenda is rational, in advancing the national interest. When discussing this, the realist and the internationalists’ theories are discussed in general. Where this general discussion is drawn upon, it will be connected to the main discussion in this chapter; the discussion on whether morality is only a rhetoric disguise used to defend purely rational actions.

There are three recurring issues throughout this chapter. First it is how ethics is most often used as motivation, rhetorical or actual, by the actor. Secondly it is when the motivation from the first issue is pure rhetoric. The first Gulf War is an example of this used in this chapter. Thirdly it is when ethics is a genuine motivation for an action. The example used in this chapter of this is the NATO war against Serbia, in Kosovo.

The outline of this chapter is as follows: First, some theories on international politics in general will be discussed. Though these theories will be examined in the context of this chapter, they will be examined on a general level as well. A concluding discussion will tie these theories together with the Just War tradition. Secondly, two empirical cases are examined. The reason for these presentations is not to show what the actual reasons were. That would be a near impossible task. It is to show examples of what these cases may look like.

5.1 Theory

There are two distinct camps within the field of international politics and morality. First there are those that believe international politics can be governed by some moral and ethical norms. These thinkers include Alfred Zimmern, professor at Oxford University; Gilbert Murray, who was the president of the League of Nations Union; Nicholas Murray Butler, the president of Columbia University; and James T. Shotwell, the first Carnegie professor in international relations (McElroy, 1992:5). In the literature they are referred to as internationalists. They can be contrasted to those who believe that morality should play no part in the international arena. These thinkers include Hans J. Morgenthau and Reinhold Niebuhr. They are referred to as realists. The Just War tradition will also be discussed.

5.1.1 The realists

The realist tradition is in many ways based on the thought of Reinhold Niebuhr (McElroy, 1992:13). However, the most prominent realist is probably Hans J. Morgenthau. One may also trace the realist tradition back to thinkers like Thomas Hobbes and Niccolo Machiavelli. Niebuhr believed that on the international arena, one should keep the national interest in mind when acting. However, as was stated in chapter 2, he did believe that ethical considerations would sometimes have to prevail over pure rational ones.

One may look at the realism in two different ways. The most obvious way, is to regard it as a descriptive theory. The realists say how they believe international politics works. Upon closer examination, one will find, however, that the realists are also normative. They do not only say how it works, but also how it ought to work (Graham, 1997:27). This distinction may seem irrelevant. It is not. If it is only descriptive, one could always argue that they are wrong, and ignore them. On the other hand, if they are normative, and you say they are wrong, they would probably say: “Well maybe it does not work exactly like that, but it ought to”. They could argue that the only reason it is not working as they describe, is because not everybody

has realized that international politics is about power. Once they realize that, they would act accordingly. It is the normative perception of realism that is interesting in this context. This gives one advantage and one disadvantage to the realists. The advantage is the one mentioned in this paragraph; that they may argue normatively. The disadvantage is that one may argue on a normative basis against the realist argument. Just because the realists say that is how it works, does not mean that one has to agree.

It seems that the realists regard acting ethically as preaching one's own ethics to others (Graham, 1997:25-30). At least if they are normative. Taking the case of war, engaging in war for other reasons than the national interest could be wrong. Other reasons, as they present it, would be e.g. democratizing a nation by the sword. Given that definition of ethics, it could be easy to agree. However, one may question that definition. According to the golden rule one should not enforce any ethical standards upon anyone who does not wish new ethical standards.¹⁶ However, to act after ethical standards is not the same as preaching ethical standards or enforcing one's values onto others. If a nation uses some ethical standards as guidelines for their actions they do not have to force these standards on others in the international community.

Consider this somewhat farfetched example. So far in history, the United States has chosen not to attack Canada, although such a campaign would almost certainly be successful; at least in the sense that the US would win militarily over Canada. One reason why such an invasion has not taken place might be that this is done for ethical reasons. One should not attack any other nation, at least not a good neighbour. Hence, Canada with its resources and territory is not violated. One could possibly argue that this may be reasoned with "isolation". Invading Canada would isolate the United States from the rest of the world, with all the consequences that would bring. Using this argument could make it rational to not invade Canada. Another side of this could

¹⁶ This view must be modified somewhat, so aggressors can be made to realize that a more peaceful set of standard might be more appropriate.

be that the cost, both human and material, could outweigh the short term benefits of invading. One could indeed also argue that Canada does not have to be invaded; the Canadian market lies up for grabs anyway. This may illustrate the following: The actual reasoning behind an action is often very complex. The decision-makers themselves do not always know the reasons for their actions. In the international sphere, the national interest is almost always part of the reasoning. Thus the realists will always see proof of their theory. If one searches for the national interest in any reasoning, they will find it, whatever the actual reason may be. Even in the cases where other reasons play a part as well, the realists have a counter-argument. Other reasons for an action are all good, as long as they do not conflict with the national interest. Since they see that their assumptions are right, they continue to say that is the way it should be. They use descriptive analysis to promote their normative guidelines.

5.1.2 Internationalists

The internationalists' differ from that of the realists. Even so, in some aspects their views may coincide with the view of the realists. Why? They specify ethics as important in the rhetoric (McElroy, 1992:8-9). They thought (early in the 20th century) that the domestic population would come to play a greater part on the international arena (ibid.). Thus one would have to use ethical arguments to please the domestic population. This would have to be done whether the actions actually were motivated by ethics, or not. In this regard, the internationalists can be said to support the argument that morality is a wrapping for purely rational action.

However, the internationalists hold forth several channels through which morality and ethics could influence the international arena. All of these channels presuppose that influence is through the foreign policy of the different states. This would reasonably be the way to influence the international arena, since this arena consists of

foreign policy makers¹⁷. The first channel is the one outlined above; pleasing the domestic population with ethical rhetoric. Another channel is through the League of Nations (McElroy, 1992:10). While the League of Nations does not exist today, its function has been transferred to the U.N. Those that did not act according to a set of standards would be sanctioned by the League of Nations. This works even today, although some countries have wider “margins of error” than the rest of the world, due to the Security Council veto. The final channel is in the conscience of the foreign policy makers (McElroy, 1992:11). They would have to act according to certain ethical norms, or act against their conscience. Hence, ethical standards would influence international politics through the narrowest passage possible in politics: The conscience of the decision makers.

This would lead to the following conclusion. It is true that the internationalists talk of ethics as a wrapping for the public. They say more than that, though. At the very least the conscience of the policy makers cannot be said to be a wrapping. Thus the internationalists acknowledged that morality could, and indeed should, play a part in the international sphere. They believed that the rhetoric was only one way in which morality could play this part.

5.1.3 The Just War tradition

It is often said that “all is fair in love and war”. Is all fair in war or are there norms that should not be violated even in war? War is probably the most extreme environment for action in the international sphere. If one acts ethically under the extreme conditions of war, one could reason that one would act ethically in other, less extreme situations. The Just War tradition discusses both when a war is just, and how to fight justly in the same war¹⁸. The question at hand is whether the Just War

¹⁷ One could argue here that international organisations as e.g. the U.N. or the International Court of Justice do not consist of foreign policy makers but that they are still a part of international politics. While this may indeed be true, those objections are not considered here, for the sake of argument. In addition, these thoughts arose at a time when the League of Nations were the only established international organization.

¹⁸ Please consult paragraph 2.3 for more background information on the Just War tradition.

tradition argues for ethical standards in the international community that really exists, or if these standards are just a rhetorical tool.

The Just War tradition can be considered from both sides of the argument. This paragraph will show that the second point (of the two presented below) is probably the best way to interpret the Just War tradition. The two different points of argument are as follows. Firstly the Just War tradition gives arguments that can be used to defend actions that were done for non-ethical reasons. Secondly, and more importantly, the Just War tradition gives a set of standards that guide actions in the international security area.

The first point would be the realists' point of view. It would be good and nice to use the rhetoric of Just War when one can make such arguments. One should not, however, believe that these standards would actually influence the reasoning behind the actions. Indeed one should by no means act according to the Just War tradition if it obviously conflicts with the national interest. The only standards that are used, and should be used, are those of the National Interest. This argument is the same as the general argument for the realists.

The second point would be the traditional view of the Just War theorists. As was presented in paragraph 2.3.1, the Just War tradition gives guidelines along two different axes: Both when to resort to violence ("jus ad bellum") and how to act when resorting to violence ("jus in bello") are discussed.

Interpreting the Just War tradition, one should understand that this is not just a set of arguments to be used as one sees fit. Although the interpretation would vary from theorist to theorist, probably all Just War theorists would agree that the Just War tradition should influence the different policy-makers. Then it would be more than just "empty rhetoric". It would be an ethical standard, to be used in international politics in general, but especially in war and war-like situations.

One interesting point that can be made here is this: The discussion on whether or not a war one engages in is just (according to the Just War tradition) tends not to occur

when one know there would be a negative answer (Vaux, 1992:18). This would imply that one engages in war and argues with the Just War tradition only when such an argument can be made. It would also imply that the Just War tradition is not universally applied. Wars do occur without reference, even rhetorical reference, to the Just War tradition.

5.1.4 How morality may exist independently in international politics

The realists think of ethics as promoting one's values to other nations. With that interpretation in mind, they would probably be right. Preaching ethics to other nations would make the world a less safe place to live. More wars would undoubtedly erupt as a result of foreign policy based on preaching values, at least if it is done with sword in hand. That is not the definition of ethics that has been used in this thesis, though. Of course, arguing that our way of life and our values would greatly improve the living standards of the people of a different nation, could be in line with the maximin rule of John Rawls (presented in Chapter 4 above). If the poorest in the nation which is "receiving" new values, improve their standard of living, it could be the right thing to do. However, usually there are casualties in these types of conflict. If it is war, there are almost certainly going to be, at least some, casualties on both sides. In modern wars, the casualties are also often civilian or non-combatants. Up to 70'000 deaths can be attributed to the sanctions against Iraq between the invasion of Kuwait and the end of the war (Vaux, 1992:18) and several hundred thousands in the years that followed. Even when the new values are imposed through "peaceful" means, e.g. economic sanctions and boycotts, experience has shown us that those in charge are those who suffers the least as the case was in Iraq in the 1990s (Vaux, 1992). Based on this argument, these actions would not be considered ethical according to the maximin rule. According to the golden rule, no people should be forced into accepting new social norms and values. Only if the people were accepting or wanting these new values, would this be acceptable. It could be as simple as that. The trouble arises when some of the people want an intervention, but not all. It is

difficult to give one answer that would apply to all these cases. The guideline above can be used. There are some things that can be said, though. If the majority wants change, and they do not sidestep the rights of the minority, that could be good. On the other hand, if the majority wants to remove some of the basic rights of the minority of the people, that would violate several of the theories above. Every right every man has should be available to every other man. This can be attributed to both the golden rule, and to John Rawls.

Going back to the realist argument, one can see that when defining ethics on the international arena, Morgenthau's views differ from what has been stated in this thesis. It would not be very difficult to argue that it is plainly wrong to take ethical considerations in the international sphere, using Morgenthau's definition of ethics. However, using the guidelines that are presented in this thesis, the answer would be different.

Why is this interesting in this setting? The realists believe that the role of ethics in the international community is largely restricted to rhetoric. This would be true; at least according to the definition of ethics in the international community presented by the realists. However, that definition can be said to be flawed. Using a flawed definition gives the realists an argument against ethical standards. If a more nuanced definition is used, like the one presented in this thesis, the argument that ethical standards do indeed have a place in the international community, beyond that of rhetoric, will be strengthened.

One can also raise the question whether morality, though only through rhetoric, plays a part on the international arena. Do ethics, argued only to defend one's actions, in that way play a part on its own? Indeed, it plays a part, if not on the international arena, then on the national arena. Actions that cannot in any way be defended using ethical rhetoric can create an "anti-movement" in the nation in question. This feature is mostly found in democracies, where freedom of speech is exercised. Thus, if a policy-maker acts to create upheaval in his nation, he may lose his political position.

In this way the international arena will be affected as well. Even if the political leaders remain in their place, it may result in a policy change.

Another question that arises concerns the psychological processes that work through the minds of the decision-makers. Sometimes, if a person makes a decision that obviously conflicts with that person's values, he will invent justifications for himself. Social psychologists call this "cognitive dissonance" (Moghaddam, 1998:114-118). According to this theory a person will argue, to himself, that an action is correct, because he performed it. The standards are changed to make them compatible with the action. What implications does this have on the theme of this thesis and this chapter? Consider the following example: John Doe performed an action, purely motivated by rationality. This action is in conflict with his attitudes. According to the cognitive dissonance theory, chances are he would change his attitudes, unknowingly, to fit those of the action he undertook.

"A theme arising from cognitive dissonance research is that when people appear foolish, immoral or harmful, they feel uncomfortable. A change in reported attitudes is one strategy to make themselves appear more positive and thus feel more comfortable" (Moghaddam, 1998:123),

If that happens in international politics, the change would be in ethical values. Thus, one could argue ethically, even if it violates one's standards. Simply by subconsciously changing one's standards to fit the action performed, this change occurs. This change would primarily occur in the mind of the person in question. When the mind changes so may the rhetoric.

One can also point to other reasons why values might change, more directly than the reasons implied in the cognitive dissonance theory. Think back to the example above, where the US would militarily occupy Canada. One of the reasons mentioned previously was that it may indeed be irrational to engage in such a venture. It could lead to isolationism, and the US would suffer from being isolated from the rest of the world. This shows that one may act ethically, not because of a desire to do so, but because of third party involvement; represented here by the rest of the world. Another

example of third party involvement could be the population of a nation. The foreign policy makers of a democracy would have to act according to the wishes of the general public. To do otherwise could lead them to them losing power. As a result the decision-makers' policy may be more ethically acceptable than they otherwise would have been. One adjusts one's strategy after third party pressure. Another example of this may be economic sanctions. When economic sanctions are enforced, data shows that they have little or no effect (Pape, 1997). Jon Hovi (2001) proposes that these sanctions do work, but only before they are enforced. Hovi (2001:8) illustrates that when threatened with economic sanctions, a nation being threatened is more likely to give in. Doing so would be a direct result of third party involvement. He also points to the fact that those threatened with economic sanctions have violated some standard or norm (Hovi, 2001:9). The use of sanctions in other cases might make the offending nation reconsider, for fear of economic sanctions. This is implied or indirect third party pressure.

5.1.5 Summary and conclusion of the discussion

Although the view presented by Morgenthau is well argued, it may seem off target. The definition Morgenthau presents is not the same as the one presented in this thesis. Morgenthau believes that one should not act to enforce one's own values and ethical norms onto others. This view is supported by the standards set forth by the golden rule. However, when suffering in another nation reaches a certain point it would seem right to intervene. Where this point lies may be a question that has to be answered politically. One can only conclude that morality can and does play its own part in the international sphere. It plays a different part than that of publicly arguing morally over an action that was done for pure rational reasons.

Ethical actions may also be a result of third party involvement. Sometimes the people is the third party, or sometimes it is other nations. Acting after ethical standards, as a result of a third party threat, spoken or not, is one possible way for ethics to actually have a role in the international community.

Another argument that arises, especially in democracies, is this: Even if ethics is only part of the rhetoric, i.e. the reasoning behind an action is rational; it may affect the international arena. In the cases where ethical rhetoric is farfetched or impossible to use, it could create a change of leaders. This would again create a different setting in international politics, thus ethics (or the lack thereof) plays a part in the international sphere, even if it is primarily through the rhetoric of the policy-makers. This is an example of third party involvement.

5.2 Two case studies

This paragraph will examine the first Gulf War. Although the full process behind the actual reasoning would be difficult to understand, it will be attempted. The actual reason will be compared to the official reason.

5.2.1 Gulf War I

In August 1990, Iraqi troops entered Kuwait City. This resulted in a massive response from the international community. It was seen as a clear violation of the sovereignty of Kuwait (Vaux, 1992:12). After the invasion of Kuwait, the United States, and later the United Nations, engaged in a policy of siege and embargo (Vaux, 1992:13). This did not force Iraq to withdraw its troops. As a result of Iraq's failure to comply with a UN sanctioned ultimatum, the coalition, led by the US, commenced the bombing of Iraq in January 1991. The coalition had three demands, namely that Iraq should withdraw from Kuwait, release Western "guests" held in Iraq and Kuwait, and restore the al-Sabah government (Vaux, 1992:18). Only one demand was fulfilled, the "guests" were released.

An advisor to President George Bush Sr. said this to Time magazine in August 1990:

“In terms of directional clarity, this has been an easy call. Even a dolt understands the principle. We need the oil. It is nice to talk about standing up for freedom, but Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are not exactly democracies [...] there’s nothing to waiver about here [...] If Kuwait’s exports were oranges [...] there would be no issue” (quoted from Vaux, 1992:9).

Even though this was merely a statement made by an advisor, it at least indicates that other concerns than the mere freedom of the Kuwaiti people played a part. Kenneth Vaux says that President Bush Sr. also had unguarded comments where he said it was all about oil, but provides no quotes or references to support this (ibid.).

When the ground war started in late February 1991, the Soviet Union was working on a peace proposal. According to Vaux (1992:32), the US feared that Iraq would accept this proposal. This caused President Bush Sr. to give Iraq an ultimatum that was impossible to accept (ibid.). Two days before the ground war started President Bush Sr. ordered Iraq to start the withdrawal of Iraqi troops out of Kuwait. President Bush Sr. already knew that it would take at least two weeks for such a demand to be received and implemented in visible signs (ibid.). He had already given the green light for the ground war (ibid.).

This short recap of the major events that took place before the Gulf War could indicate the following: This war was a direct intervention to free Kuwait, but only because of the oil Kuwait produced. It is difficult, if not impossible to give an accurate answer to whether or not this was actually the case. One can look at certain factors that may indicate an answer, though.

This would suggest that the Iraqi aggression against Kuwait was at least not the only reason one engaged in this war. Apparently, the US-led coalition acted against Iraq to liberate Kuwait. This was the official reason for the war, and the reason communicated publicly. If this were the case, one may wonder why the US-led forces changed their policy goals from liberating Kuwait, to destroying Iraqi infrastructure and its military (Vaux, 1992:19). The Iraqi infrastructure would be obvious military objectives in a war, but would most probably be disproportionate to liberate Kuwait.

All one had to do to free Kuwait were to drive the Iraqi forces out of Kuwait. One could leave the infrastructure in Iraq untouched.

Even though it is difficult to say what were the reasons behind any action, one thing is apparent: From the arguments presented here, it seems that the liberation of Kuwait primarily was done for other reasons than the Iraqi aggression, one of these reason being oil. To the US, oil is an important aspect. Hence, Gulf War I may have been driven by the national interest. The rhetoric used was one of morality: To free Kuwait from an oppressing Iraq. Hence, the war would never have happened without Iraq aggression, but oil was the factor that made the US-led coalition to want to liberate Kuwait. Whether or not that is actually the case, is close to impossible to say. The arguments here would nevertheless support that theory.

5.2.2 The bombing of Serbia in the late 1990s

This paragraph will examine the rhetoric behind the air-campaign against Serbia. Was the rhetoric used to make the air-campaign acceptable, or was it a reflection of the actual situation?

In 1998 there was a rising crisis in Kosovo. Under Marshal Tito's regime, Kosovo had limited self-rule under Yugoslav sovereignty, as a self-governing province of Serbia. When, in 1989, Milosevic consolidated his power in Yugoslavia, this changed (Ignatieff, 2000:20). Late in 1998, the US tried to negotiate a peace settlement between the two parties in this growing conflict; Serbia¹⁹ and Kosovo (Ignatieff, 2000).

Despite all efforts to the contrary, diplomacy was not effective to stop the human disaster in Kosovo. As a result of this, NATO decided to engage in an air campaign

¹⁹ Serbia is used, although the conflict was between NATO and Yugoslavia. The reason Serbia is used is because it was the Serbian rule that was the target and not Yugoslavia as such.

against Serbia, who was perceived as the aggressors (Ignatieff, 2000). Michael Ignatieff writes the following after observing the genocide from a Kosovo hillside:

“Only one thought seemed possible: this cannot go on. This must be stopped. Now. By persistent and precise military force. The claim that there was no national interest at stake here suddenly seemed offensively beside the point” (Ignatieff, 2000:45)

Although these were the thoughts of an academician, one could easily imagine that the decision-makers reasoned accordingly. Anyway, after exhausting diplomatic channels, the United States and NATO started the air war in March 1999. The goal of the air campaign was to make Milosevic concede to the proposal which he refused to accept during the diplomatic efforts before (Ignatieff, 2000).

Unlike Gulf War I, the war²⁰ in the former Yugoslavia started in spite of all efforts to prevent it. Ignatieff (ibid.) gives a clear impression that the US and other parts of NATO as well, tried all other channels before resorting to violence. This seems to indicate that the alliance wished for “anything but war”. However, they were not able to stop the deportation of Muslims from Kosovo, hence the air campaign started. Given the human tragedy about to happen, war was the only option. To even consider national interest in this case would be offensive to some, as the quote from Ignatieff indicates.

The Kosovo intervention was a result of Serbian aggression against a mostly unarmed people, only defended by poorly equipped guerrillas (ibid.). There was no direct national interest at stake. However, one wanted to prevent an ethnic conflict from spreading to a larger part of Europe. This could be interpreted as long-term national interest, at least for the European countries. Instability in the region would affect those countries close by, as they may have been forced to accept refugees, and aid in other ways. It was cheaper, thus reasonable to intervene. Whether that was the actual reason or the reason was the human tragedy, is almost impossible to tell. The

²⁰ There is some disagreement to whether or not this conflict actually was a war. Nevertheless, in this thesis it is considered to have been one.

arguments presented here would support the theory that this war was waged for ethical reasons.

5.2.3 Discussion of the case studies

First Gulf War I was presented. This presentation assumed that this war, though argued ethically, where basically about oil. The United States depends on oil from the Arabic world, so this was in essence about national interest. It was shown how an advisor to the Bush Sr. administration claimed that it was all about oil. Secondly, the intervention, or war, against Serbia, to prevent genocide in Kosovo was presented. It was assumed that this war was ethical in its nature. The rhetoric was ethical, but so was the actual reasoning, at least according to the arguments in this chapter.

Both Gulf War I and the air campaign against Serbia were justified using ethical arguments. The actual reasoning presented in this paragraph indicates that in Gulf War I, the rhetoric may not have been identical to the reasoning. While the rhetoric can reflect some of the reasoning, it seems that other considerations, e.g. national interest through oil, were taken as well. Although the rhetoric was based on ethics, other reasons have at least contributed. The arguments presented in this chapter seem to suggest that in the Kosovo intervention, the rhetoric and the apparent reasoning were much more in sync. NATO apparently wanted to avoid the use of force, but ran out of other options. Thus, NATO engaged in the campaign to prevent a human disaster.

This illustrates that rhetoric can be used to front a case that is simply ethical in its nature, as the case can be argued to have been in Kosovo. It illustrates also that the rhetoric can be used to hide the real agenda, or at least parts of it, as can be claimed to have been the case in Gulf War I. This would indicate that, at least, morality plays a part on the international arena, beyond that of rhetoric.

This leads to the conclusion that ethics may be a rhetorical disguise for rational actions. But ethics may just as well be a part of international politics in its own right.

This would be different on a case to case basis. Whether or not each different case would be placed in one of these categories or the other would be extremely difficult to say, but they would probably be a little bit of both, in most cases.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed how ethics may be part of the rhetoric of nations. It has discussed whether or not ethics plays a part in the international sphere on its own, or if it is just through rhetoric.

At first the realist and the internationalist views were discussed. Then the Just War tradition was brought in to give a more specific theory to the discussion. Then two cases were discussed, the first Gulf War and the NATO war against Serbia (or actually the former Yugoslavia). It was assumed that Gulf War I was ethical in its rhetoric, but the actual reasoning tended more pure national interest, in this case the oil. The other case, the NATO war, was presumed to be more ethical in its nature. The ethical rhetoric coincided more with the actual reasoning than in Gulf War I. Even here, one could find elements of national interest, though.

Mainly three issues have been examined. First it was how ethics is often put forward as a motivation for action. This is basic theory. Both examples given illustrate this point. Secondly, in many cases, ethics is simply the rhetoric for actions with other motivations than ethical ones. In this chapter, Gulf War I is an example of that. Finally, there are the cases where ethics is the motivation for certain actions. In this chapter the example was the bombing of Serbia in 1999.

There is no easy way to conclude this chapter. It seems that both those who believe ethics can survive on its own, and those who believe that ethics is pure rhetoric have valid arguments, descriptively. Normative, the arguments of the realists, though valid, fails to hit the target. Using a different definition of ethics than the realists, gives a completely different answer. Ethics does indeed have a role to play on the international arena, beyond that of rhetoric.

6. Final Words

In this thesis, the terms ethics and rationality have been discussed, both individually and together. This final chapter will summarize the thesis as a whole, and conclude with some final remarks.

The research questions were as follows: *How do morality and rationality work as a motivational factor?* That question was answered through some more specific questions: *What is rational, what is ethical and how do people actually act in experiments in the prisoner's dilemma? What is rational, what is ethical and how do people actually act in experiments in ultimatum and dictator games? Is morality only used as rhetorical wrapping, or is morality a motivation on its own?*

6.1 Summary of the thesis

This thesis consists of a total of six chapters. Chapter 1 and the present chapter are introductory and concluding. Chapter 2 introduced the terms and discussed them in general. Chapters 3 and 4 were primarily about ethics and rationality in the setting of different game theoretical models. The prisoner's dilemma was discussed in chapter 3. In chapter 4 ultimatum and dictator games were examined and discussed. The final of the main chapters were of a different nature. Chapter 5 discussed actual cases where ethics and rationality may coincide, in the rhetoric of the policy-makers. The discussion is whether or not ethics exists on its own, or is just part of the rhetoric.

There is one joining factor to all these chapters, and that is they all discuss rationality and ethics. All of them use some basic definition of what ethical standards consist of. What ethics are, is a tough definition, to be sure. This thesis has used a couple of different definitions to base the discussion on. One is one of the most basic ethical standards: The golden rule. Its simplicity makes it easy to understand, and is in its different variations represented in many religions around the world. A variation of the golden rule is: "Do to others as you wish others to do to you". The golden rule is not

without problems, though. Taken to its extreme, using the golden rule to make decisions can give self-destructive results. That is why other theories also have been discussed. These other theories are utilitarianism and John Rawls' maximin-principle. Utilitarianism is somewhat well-known and is easy to discuss together with rationality. Both utilitarianism and game theory uses the term "utility". This makes it easy to see what is preferable according to utilitarianism when using game theory. The maximin-principle was discussed to get a more modern approach to the complex field of ethical thought. The maximin-principle says that the action that gives the best possible outcome, for the party with the worst outcome, is preferable.

Rationality was primarily studied in game theoretical terms. This was true in chapter 3 and chapter 4. In game theory, rationality is maximizing the utility (or expected utility) given the action of the other part, or the other parties of the game. In chapter 5, rationality was used as promoting national interest. Although some world leaders (try to) promote self interest, these were disregarded in this thesis. Promoting national interest is the primary obligation of the policy-makers in the different nations of the world. What does national interest consist of? In this thesis it was defined as the welfare of the people in question. Not territorial, economic or other expansion, to further the power of the nation as such.

6.2 Conclusion and final remarks

To answer the question, "*what is rational, what is ethical and how do people actually act in experiments in the prisoner's dilemma?*" I refer to the findings in chapter 3. In prisoner's dilemma rationality prescribes the opposite action of morality. Rationality generally prescribes defecting in prisoner's dilemma situations. Morality would be to co-operate. In experiments people tend to act less rationally than one predicts using games theory. This might indicate that morality actually plays a part when confronted with a prisoner's dilemma situation.

To answer the question, “*what is rational, what is ethical and how do people actually act in experiments in ultimatum and dictator games?*” I refer to the conclusion of chapter 4. Rationality prescribes to propose near to nothing, or to accept anything more than nothing, in ultimatum games. In dictator games, rationality prescribes to take everything for oneself. Different ethical theories give different answers to how one should act. My conclusion is that one should try to establish a 50-50 split between the two parties, in both game types. In experiments, one sees again that people tend to behave less rationally than game theory predicts. Some of this may be because of morality.

To answer the question, “*is morality only used as rhetorical wrapping, or is morality a motivation on its own?*” I refer to chapter 5. The conclusion was that ethics can be used as a wrapping for rational actions, as is illustrated by Gulf War I here. Ethics can also exist on its own, as the case was presented of the NATO bombing of the former Yugoslavia.

Finally, to answer the main question: *How do morality and rationality work as a motivational factor in international politics?* There are no easy answers to this. Both morality and rationality can be said to exist in international politics. It is probably easiest to find examples of rationality, but look closely, and ethical actions will appear as well.

To conclude this thesis, one can start by referring to the title: “Doing Good or Doing Well”. Whether one chooses to do good or to do well is in principle a personal question, within the boundaries of the law. In the international sphere, the difference between doing good or doing well have far greater implications than on the personal level. Egoistically pursuing only the national interest may create wars and suffering in different places. On the other hand, selflessly forgetting the national interest will probably create difficulties for one’s own citizens. To decide which rope to walk is a difficult decision. The best answer would probably be to try and walk on both ropes at once. That is a difficult task, given that the ropes are not parallel. One should make an effort to keep track on both the national interest and act after simple ethical

standards on the international arena. If one manages that, one is a great state leader, and a statesman.

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